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CHRISTIAN CHURCH

OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK

AND OF THE FREE-STATE OF NEW-YORK

A SERIES OF SERMONS

PREACHED BY THE REV. J. C. B. B.

LONDON

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CHRISTIAN CHARITY,

ITS

OBLIGATIONS AND OBJECTS,

WITH

REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT STATE OF SOCIETY.

IN

A SERIES OF SERMONS,

BY

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P R E F A C E.

Two reasons have concurred and induced me to prepare the following Sermons for the press.

First, a conviction that the duty of attending to the wants and circumstances of those around us, is far less generally practised, than is consistent with the spirit of Christianity.

Secondly, a belief that attention to such wants and circumstances, i. e. that CHARITY in all its branches, is the appointed preventive of the evils connected with a fully peopled and highly civilised community. Where it has not acted as a preventive, it may yet be blessed as a remedy.

There exists, therefore, in the religion which is professed in our country, a principle of charity; and there exists in the charity which might be exercised, a remedy for the moral and physical

evils which abound amongst us; and if the one could be brought to bear upon the other more decidedly than is the case at present, a beneficial change in the state of society would ensue.

I am aware, however, that it would be an inverted course of argument to enforce the exercise of charity, and not rather to inculcate the principle from which charity must proceed. I am aware that nothing can produce or maintain a consistent course of usefulness and benevolence, except the divine root from which such conduct springs. It must be the growth of the Gospel. It must be begun and continued from faith in Christ Jesus, not merely professed in the creed, but received into the heart, and influencing it to fulfil all righteousness. He has himself said, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good." "If ye abide in me, ye shall bring forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." The strengthening and nourishing the root is the proper way to make the branch productive. Still the branch may require attention. It may be pruned, that it may bear more fruit. And there may be an inadequate sense of the obligations of the Gospel in a particular case, among those who unite in holding, and sincerely holding, the truths of the Gospel. Habits may prevail of too much self-indulgence, and too little self-denial;

habits of indifference as to the state of others ; indifference as to what is needed for their welfare, and might be supplied if the means were not wanting.

And, further, though it is undeniably true that the highest style of charity can only proceed from the highest style of principles, and that according as the faith is so will the practice be ; yet we must bear in mind that according to the divine ordinance the principles and the practice act and re-act upon one another ; and that one mode, in which it pleases God to raise the christian character generally, is through the reflex effect of good deeds upon the doer. One who acquiesces in indolent or selfish habits, will never rise to eminence in religion. Whilst another, who overcomes the natural tendency to such habits, and devotes a portion of his leisure and his substance to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, will find the result of such benevolence in the increasing vividness of his faith and ardour of his piety. “ For the earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.”¹

On this account an enforcement of the claims, and an exhibition of the objects of christian charity,

¹ Heb. vi. 7.

may conduce to the extension and advancement of christian faith. The principle may be promoted whilst the practice is enlarged.

Especially as there are prevailing notions on the subject of charity, which float as it were on the surface of society, and serve to check that inquiry and consideration which must precede a course of activity and exertion.

One of these is an idea that a certain quantity of evil must exist in the world, which no efforts can overcome; which it is every man's business to avoid or correct, as regards his own case; but that any attempt to remove it generally, would be like attempting to reduce a mountain to a plain. Desponding ideas of this kind must necessarily preclude exertion. They may not prevent the occasional exercise of benevolence, but they repress the active and enduring energy which a systematic habit of usefulness requires.

The cause of charity has been still further affected by an opinion which has gained ground of late years, that the exercise of it is not only useless, but absolutely injurious; that industry is restrained, and the moral character of the receiver lowered, by such assistance; so that it is rather our duty to repress than to encourage the feelings which induce us to relieve distress and want, when

brought plainly before our eyes. Some such conclusion is supposed to result from the known effects produced by what is now allowed to have been a mistaken, though well-intended system in the administration of our English poor laws.

But the conclusion must not extend beyond the premises. The system was, that a deficiency in the wages of labour should be supplied by public means compulsorily levied. Experience clearly proved that no body politic could long subsist under so vicious a system, which was alike calculated to injure the character of the labourer and of the employer of labour; which inflicted equal mischief on the property and on the morals of the land. But it nowhere appears that private benevolence is thus injurious; or that assistance judiciously directed and discriminately applied, is not equally blessed to the giver and the receiver. At the present period such benevolence is doubly called for; because it will be long before the body of labourers can recover from the effects of a system which had continued for forty years in operation, and of which they had not been the authors but the victims. The evils of re-action, though far less serious than might have been apprehended, should be closely watched in every neighbourhood,

and diligently relieved. Public charity is open to many objections, and should only be admitted as a remedy of greater evils. But private charity is essential to the nature and condition of mankind.

To whatever cause it may be ascribed, wants and privations of various kinds are suffered to exist, which can only be removed by more general co-operation, arising from more general conviction. Statistical inquiries, which have been extensively pursued in many of our great towns, have brought to light a condition of things, both moral and physical, which ought not to be endured in a country professing the religion of the Gospel, and abounding in the means of amending that condition.² Both the moral and the physical wants should be relieved. But they must be attacked together. They are closely connected. And whatever attempts are made to improve the temporal condition, the results will be feeble and disappointing unless the principal causes of misery are

² The documents on which these remarks are founded, may be seen abundantly in the Reports of the Mendicity Society, the District Visitors' Record, the Journals of the Statistical Societies of London, Manchester &c.; the published speech of Mr. Slaney on the State of Populous Towns; Alison on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, &c. &c.

removed, and the whole character is raised by moral and spiritual instruction.³

³ The well-being of the community requires that every individual should have within his reach a church where he may worship God, and be instructed by the minister of that church in the things which belong to his everlasting peace. And such is the design of our Establishment, such, we may say, is the principle of Christianity: the disciples of Christ from the first assembled themselves together, and elders were ordained over them, who should teach, rebuke, exhort, with all authority and doctrine.

In the manufacturing districts, and in most of our great towns, there does not exist at present, to speak generally, one third of this requisite provision, either of church-room or of ministers. The churches, which ought to contain at least a third, will not suffice that a tenth part of the whole population should be present together; and the ministers have the nominal care of three times the number which they are capable of superintending. This still remains the case amongst a million of people in the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire alone, and probably twice that number would be found in the same circumstances in the other parts of Britain.

If this want were supplied, education would follow in the train; such education as is compatible with the habits of early labour which prevail, and prevail increasingly, through every section of the land. And this early labour, which it seems impossible to restrain, makes an opening for that most valuable benevolence which watches for opportunities of instructing and advising the young as they advance towards maturity, and preserving them from the snares and temptations by which they are surrounded. And, in truth, that which in populous neighbourhoods is no less needful than schools or churches, that

I am not so visionary as to suppose that the land can be cleared of misery and want. No exertions of benevolence can counteract the effects of sin; can make the family of the drunkard comfortable, or give competence to the idle and extravagant. Still the condition of a large portion of our community would have been different from what we actually find it, if there had not been wanting on the part of the higher classes that attention to the lower, which both humanity and Christianity require; and especially if they who employ the labour, and so promote the increase of the working classes, had paid due regard to the welfare of those whom they caused to congregate.⁴ We find, by experience,

which must give effect to them and bring them into use, is the intercourse of the higher and better educated class with the classes which labour for them, and are the sources of their own prosperity and superiority. The want of this communication has occasioned multitudes to sink into a state of depression and discomfort which acts most injuriously on the mind; and physical distress has become moral degradation.

⁴ The Reports of benevolent societies, and experience of benevolent persons (for there are already many such; what we desire is, to increase their number) are continually bringing to light dreadful instances of destitution; and show the straits to which in a population like ours a multitude of families are reduced, from which timely advice might have preserved them, and out of which timely assistance might still deliver them. The worst and the most numerous cases, as might be supposed,

that when such habits of attention do prevail, the manners become improved, the dress more cleanly, the rooms more decent, the whole neighbourhood

exist in the metropolis, and our other largest towns, to which destitute individuals, or still worse, destitute families, are led by false expectations or false representations to resort, and are soon lost in a labyrinth, and encompassed by every species of temptation or privation. Especially as the parochial system, in many parts of London, and in most of our provincial towns, has been subverted by the increase of population and the want of subdivision. And, unfortunately, whilst the usefulness is gone, the inconveniences remain.

The physical state of the lower classes may commonly be inferred from the spiritual ; as the spiritual state has an immediate connexion with the physical. We may form, therefore, a strong presumption concerning both, from the fact, that the agents of the London City Mission visited a hundred and twenty thousand houses, inhabited by seven hundred thousand persons ; of whom more than one fourth, viz. thirty-five thousand four hundred families, consisting of one hundred and seventy-five thousand persons, did not possess a page of Scripture.

In Liverpool, one seventh of the whole population, or one fifth of the working classes, live in cellars, of which there are seven thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, containing thirty-nine thousand persons.

In Manchester and Salford, out of one hundred and eighty thousand persons of the working class, eighteen thousand live in cellars.

In Bury, (Lancashire,) in a thousand and fifty houses, of

more civilised. Vice hides its head, instead of coming into open day. This effect is produced in some degree, even among loose and crowded courts, or where cellars have been long occupied and wants long neglected. Those who visit these resorts of poverty, find numbers to whom the sound of the Gospel is as strange as it was to the gaoler at Philippi; numbers whom the accents of human kindness have never reached, much less the voice of divine mercy. But they also find that "the arm of the Lord is not shortened," that truth has not lost its power; and an improvement in the spiritual state is sometimes the forerunner, and sometimes the consequence, of a change in the temporal condition. There are places, we must acknowledge, where the evil is become so deeply-seated as to defy the efforts of ordinary benevolence, and require public aid and legislative authority.⁵ But even

which a census was taken, the provision of beds was found to average only one in four of the population inhabiting them.

Mortality, to a certain degree, is a test of the condition of the people. In Manchester, twenty-nine of the infants born die within the first year; and forty do not attain the fourth. In Leeds, one out of twenty-eight persons die annually; whereas the mortality of the kingdom throughout, does not exceed one in thirty-six.

⁵ Through the exertions of Mr. Slaney, this aid has been recently called in; and the Report of a committee of the House of Commons proposes measures of remedy.

these must originate in private observation and interposition. Individual attention leads the way to general conviction, and public measures follow.

If, indeed, the amount of money demanded for the spiritual instruction and temporal comfort of the people, bore any comparison to the amount of penury and ignorance which is to be removed ; if it involved an expenditure which would require a change in the general habits of the class employing it ; we might hesitate to recommend the object or enforce the obligations which are brought forward in the following Sermons. But the ease with which the demand might be met, and the wants supplied, adds greatly to the weight of individual responsibility.

There are many sources of wealth to Great Britain, in addition to the produce of the soil. But leaving everything else out of the calculation, and taking the annual produce of land alone, that cannot be estimated at less than three hundred millions.⁶

The return which is made to the Author of this prosperity, in the shape of what is generally called charity, i. e. in such objects as are recommended in

⁶ Mr. M'Queen (Statistics of British Empire, p. 79) calculates the produce of the United Kingdom at £474,129,688, and adds the documents on which he grounds his calculation.

the following volume, may amount to about twelve millions, viz. :—⁷

Poor rate, annually, say	5,000,000
Add an equal amount, as private charity	5,000,000
Various religious societies, say	1,000,000
Local and parochial charities, as schools, hospitals, &c., say	1,000,000
		<hr/>
		£12,000,000

The amount is one twenty-fifth of the produce of land alone, all other sources of revenue being left out of the account. No one can honestly read the Scriptures, and maintain that this is the share or portion of what is annually spent, which is there expected to be withdrawn from private uses, and applied to the various wants of the necessitous.

An annual addition to this amount, if not inconsiderable in itself, inconsiderable compared with the object to be attained, would furnish to the population what is needed to its spiritual interests and physical comfort. It would provide the additional means of public worship and religious instruction. It would provide such assistance to the large families, the occasional loss of earnings, the season of sickness, the helplessness of declining years, among the labouring classes, as public means ought not to

⁷ Though the poor rate is compulsory, it may fairly be set to the account of the nation at large, which certainly does not desire and would not consent to its abolition.

contribute, and yet christian benevolence ought not to withhold. It would provide schools and teachers, for those especially who have passed the period of childhood, and entered on the stage of active life with little advantage of education. It would watch over cases of destitution, support the orphan, and prevent his becoming the prey of ignorance or bad companionship. It would provide means for reclaiming many who have fallen into vicious habits, but who might still be recovered by timely attention, religious instruction, and temporary maintenance. In short, it would do that fully and generally, which is now done partially and imperfectly; but which shows us, where it is done, how wide may be the field of christian benevolence, and how golden an harvest may reward the husbandman.⁸

⁸I have calculated, on information as extensive as I could obtain, that the objects here enumerated might be accomplished at an addition to what is now bestowed on them, amounting to about ten shillings per head on the population: i. e. that an additional expenditure of £500 upon every thousand of the whole population would provide for the various wants which need to be supplied. Therefore (excluding the poor-rate) the voluntary amount of charity would require to be about doubled.

The only just way of estimating such a sum, is to compare it with what is spent on other purposes. It is less than one third of what is annually spent on *household furniture*. Mr. M^cQueen

If this is ever effected, if it shall ever please God to show on a large scale what the world in which man is placed might become, if only it were directed in conformity to his revealed will;—that result must be wrought by the RELIGION OF CHRIST actuating the hearts and regulating the practice of the community in general. And the intent of the present volume is to show that the RELIGION OF CHRIST, when it does actuate the heart, will direct the practice to this end; and that unless, in the main, the practice is thus directed, there is occasion for much doubt, and need for much self-inquiry, as to the reality of christian FAITH.

calculates (on just grounds) the value of household furniture in the country at five hundred millions. Supposing this on the average to be renewed every twenty years, the annual expenditure on household furniture is twenty-five millions.

This is merely in the way of illustration. I am not recommending this particular method of supplying the want. Something, no doubt, should be taken from luxuries and superfluities of every kind. But the largest portion ought to come from that which is annually employed in adding to accumulated opulence: in adding field to field, and business to business, and factory to factory, and hoard to hoard. Indeed, if one fourth part of that capital which has been used of late years for the purpose of extending commercial and manufacturing concerns, had been devoted to purposes more conducive to the glory of God and the real welfare of the community, the reward would have been immediate, and the other three fourths producing, at this moment, a far more valuable return.

2

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN FAITH MANIFESTED IN THE HABITS OF LIFE.

JAMES xi. 22.—Seest thou how faith wrought with his works,
and by works was faith made perfect? . . . *Page 1*

SERMON II.

BENEFICENCE THE DUTY OF THE RICH.

1 TIM. vi. 17—19.—Charge them that are rich in this world,
that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches,
but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to en-
joy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works,
ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in
store for themselves a good foundation against the time to
come, that they may lay hold on eternal life . . . 17

SERMON III.

EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY.

1 COR. xiii. 13.—And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these
three: but the greatest of these is charity . . . 31

SERMON IV.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE CONSTRAINING MOTIVE OF THE
CHRISTIAN.

2 COR. v. 14.—For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live might no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them . 48

SERMON V.

POWER OF LOVE AS A PRINCIPLE OF ACTION.

JOHN xiv. 15.—If ye love me keep my commandments . 64

SERMON VI.

CHARITY THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANS.

With reference to education.

JOHN xiii. 35.—By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another . . . 81

SERMON VII.

THE SUREST MODE OF BENEFITING THE POOR.

With reference to religious instruction.

ACTS iii. 6.—Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have, give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk . . . 98

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY OF PROMOTING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

MATT. xix. 13.—Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me . . . 114

SERMON IX.

THE GOSPEL A BLESSING TO THE POOR.

With reference to the supply of church accommodation.

MATT. xi. 5.—The poor have the Gospel preached unto them
128

SERMON X.

THE DUTY OF PROVIDING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

With reference to the supply of pastoral instruction.

EZEK. xxxiv. 6.—My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them 144

SERMON XI.

DAVID'S PURPOSE TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF GOD.

With reference to the erection of churches.

1 KINGS viii. 18.—And the Lord said unto David, (my father,) Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart 164

SERMON XII.

GOD THE DISPENSER OF WEALTH.

The same object.

2 CHRON. xxv. 9.—And Amaziah said to the man of God, What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this 181

SERMON XIII.

GOD GLORIFIED IN THE BUILDING OF CHURCHES.

The same object.

HAGGAI i. 8.—Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord 197

SERMON XIV.

THE DUTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF ACTIVE EXERTIONS IN
THE CAUSE OF RELIGION.

With reference to religious societies.

HEBREWS x. 24, 25.—Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching 213

SERMON XV.

MOTIVES FOR PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL.

ACTS viii. 4.—Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word 236

SERMON XVI.

THE DUTY OF SUPPORTING MISSIONS.

MATT. x. 8.—Freely ye have received: freely give 254

SERMON XVII.

REASONS FOR MISSIONARY EXERTIONS.

MATT. vi. 10.—Thy kingdom come 282

SERMON XVIII.

ACTIVE CHARITY A PART OF PURE RELIGION.

With reference to district visiting.

JAMES i. 27.—Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world 299

SERMON XIX.

LABOUR IN THE LORD.

The same object.

ROM. xvi. 12.—Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much
in the Lord 317

SERMON XX.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

With reference to public hospitals.

JOHN xiii. 34.—A new commandment I give unto you, That ye
love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one
another 334

SERMON XXI.

THE BLESSINGS ATTENDING THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER.

With reference to a penitentiary.

JAMES v. 20.—He that converteth a sinner from the error of his
way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of
sins 353

SERMON XXII.

THE GUILT OF NEGLECTING THE STATE OF OTHERS.

With reference to an asylum for offenders.

1 JOHN ii. 9.—He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his
brother, is in darkness, even until now 369

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN FAITH MANIFESTED IN THE HABITS OF LIFE.

James xi. 22.

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by
works was faith made perfect ?*

THERE are two feelings which will be found existing in the mind of every man who has fully imbibed the spirit of the Gospel. They are not exactly similar, though they are by no means inconsistent with each other.

The first is, a sense of his unworthiness : of the meanness of his best works, the insufficiency of all his services to recommend him to the favour of God. Compared with what he ought to be ;

compared with what he might be; compared with the rule prescribed to him and the glory set before him, how lamentably cold is his heart, how grievously deficient his practice! “Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

It is from an overflowing sense of this unworthiness that St. Paul so constantly reminds his disciples of the truth—the humbling, yet consoling truth—that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” “By grace are ye saved; not of works, lest any man should boast.” By Jesus Christ “all that believe are justified from all things.” “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The other feeling which the Christian will also cherish in his mind, is a sense of the obligation laid upon him,—upon him to whom so much mercy has been shown,—that he walk worthy of the price by which he has been ransomed, of the vocation to which he has been called: that he “let his light shine before men;” that he prove himself to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ:” that he labour “to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” and show the faith which

actuates his heart by the whole tenour of his life and conversation.

It was this part of the Christian's character which was uppermost in the mind of St. James, when he wrote the passage to which the text belongs. He points out the signs by which faith in Christ Jesus will certainly manifest itself, whenever it has due possession of the heart. It will lead a man to be "a doer of the word, and not a hearer only." It will constrain him to "bridle his tongue." It will constrain him to be just; to be compassionate; to have respect unto the "brother of low degree;" to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."¹

You will at once perceive that there is nothing inconsistent in these two feelings: that a dread of trusting to our works, and a desire to show our faith by our works, may exist together, and ought to exist together, in the breast of every Christian.

God forbid, will he say, that I should look to my own self, to my own life, for justification! So far from depending upon the works which I have done, I cannot bear to think of them! So much infirmity, so much deficiency, has been mixed up with all, that I should be miserable were it not

¹ See ch. i. 22—27.

for the assurance, that “to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Such will be his constant feeling: and never so vivid as when he looks with the nearest and closest view, first into himself, and then into the law by which he is to be judged.

Still there are other seasons, during the period allotted him for “working out his salvation,” and “making his calling and election sure,”—there are seasons when a different course of thought will also be present to his mind, and be expressed in another tone. Can it be true, he will say, that I have indeed an interest in Christ? Can so corrupt a heart be indeed “led by his Spirit?” Can so barren a plant be united to “the true vine?” Can so unprofitable a servant receive a reward in heaven? I must “work whilst it is called to-day: before the night cometh.” “What do I more than others?” What reason have I to believe that I am known of Christ as one of his disciples? what token of faith can I allege, that he may confess me at last, and not assign my place among the slothful and unprofitable?

Nor is there in Scripture anything to discourage this inquiry. Nay, there is much to recommend it, to enforce it. Think of our Lord’s own words. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do

them.” “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Think also of the earnest exhortation of the apostle : “ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves.” “ For not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified before God.”

All these exhortations, which might be multiplied a hundredfold, speak the same language with the passage to which the text belongs. “ What shall it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith”—profess to believe in Christ Jesus—“ and have not works—leads no corresponding life ; —“ shall faith save him ?” *Seest thou*, how in those whose faith did save them, to whom, as to Abraham, it was counted for righteousness ;—*faith wrought with their works, and by works was faith made perfect* ? proved to have reached its intended end, to be the ruling principle of the heart, and to have possession there ?

Still more. It is not only right and scriptural to exercise this scrutiny, to feel this jealousy about ourselves, but it is essentially needful. Every age has its peculiar snare. In the early times of the

church, to profess a belief in Jesus Christ was in itself a proof of sincerity. It exposed the believer to danger and persecution. Would that we could have the same assurance now, or could be allowed to hope that all who make a true confession, or entertain an unhesitating belief, were indeed in a way of salvation ! What we now want, is not confession. To confess the truth is honourable. Not profession. We all profess and call ourselves Christians. Not an orthodox creed. The doctrines of the Gospel were never, perhaps, so universally understood, or so popularly acknowledged. What we need is PRACTICE ; practice founded on those doctrines, and in conformity with them. What we need is, that with the love of God in our mouths, we should not have the love of the world in our hearts. “ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.” “ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; he alone who doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.”

May his Spirit lighten our darkness, and purify our mental sight, that we may discern our real state, and “ assure our hearts before him.”

For we shall readily perceive that FAITH, when it has possession of the heart, must rule and regulate the practice which depends upon the heart. Faith,

when it is anything more than a conclusion of reason, or a creed of education, will manifest itself by the general course of a man's conduct; will give the tone to his sentiments, wishes, and pursuits, and therefore will be interwoven with the whole texture of his life.

For FAITH, christian faith, faith in the Gospel which we profess—what is it? What, I mean, in relation to our life and practice? It is to believe that we are “not our own:” no more our own than the slave who has been purchased is his own: that we are “bought with a price:” and that price no less a price than the blood of Christ; as the only price which will redeem a forfeited soul, or provide a ransom worthy of a just and holy God.

But what is this faith, unless it becomes a principle to live by? If he who has been purchased by another, and for another, continues to live to himself, or for the world?

But if a man does live according to this principle, it must be visible and evident that he does so. It affects his ordinary habits, it influences his ruling sentiments, too much to be concealed. The faith which is the life of his soul—which will prove, as he trusts, its eternal life—is also the faith by which he moves and acts, and has his conversation in the world.

I have said that the working of this faith will be plain and evident. There are many ways in which it will be seen. It will be seen in a tender concern for the interests of our fellow-creatures. St. John has asked, “ If a man hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? ” At first we might feel surprised, and be disposed to inquire, why should it not ? What has the love of God to do with the wants of man ? But, if we reflect a moment, we see that it has much to do ; and that the apostle puts a just and natural question. The brother is the fellow Christian. God is his Father, through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus. By the same adoption, God is our Father. And can there fail to be love between two brethren of the same family ? And where there is love, will there not be pity, and fellow-feeling, and relief ? Nothing but sin could prevent it ; nothing but that deeply-rooted sin, self-love, self-preference, self-indulgence. But this is the sin of the world, not the sin of the believers in Christ Jesus : their faith must subdue the sin of self-love, as well as every other sin ; their faith must give them a new and a stronger affection than the desire of earthly things. And therefore St. John may justly assume, that if

faith in Christ Jesus has brought a man to the love of God, such faith will be seen in its effects, and will be manifested by his feelings and conduct towards his neighbour.

It has always proved so. When the world first began to see bodies of persons who were actuated by christian faith, it first began to see those who considered the interests of their fellow-creatures as their own. We need go no farther than Scripture, where we find St. Paul giving directions to the Corinthian disciples: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."² This was done to provide for the necessities of those brethren who were in adverse circumstances. So, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of a dearth prevailing throughout a great part of the Roman empire. The disciples in Antioch, when they heard of it, "every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto their brethren who dwelt in Judea."³ To this they were incited by their faith. That faith *wrought with their works*. They denied themselves, that they might impart to others. Where no such faith exists, no such relief is thought of. Self there is all in all. The natives of India some years ago experienced a like visitation, a grievous

² 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

³ Acts xi. 28—30.

dearth. And they were astonished that our countrymen, sojourning in that land, should endeavour to save the lives of many destitute creatures, who had lain down in the streets and roads to die. The Gospel had not been preached among them, and taught them to regard the comforts or pity the miseries of their neighbours. Ah, brethren, those who neglect or despise the Gospel, know not how much they are themselves indebted to it. That Gospel, preached in our country, and believed and followed by many, has a diffusive influence of which we can hardly trace the limits: just as the sun in the heavens communicates a genial warmth to the places which it reaches and benefits by its reflection, and is felt far beyond the spot where its rays are actually shining.

But the operation of FAITH upon the life and practice is not confined or limited to the temporal wants of others. It extends its concern to their souls: and its doing so is the most decided outward evidence to which we can appeal of the faith which exists within.

The man who, whether he believes in the Gospel as a divine revelation or no, does not take it for his rule, i. e. who has no practical faith, he regards his fellow-creatures in a totally different light from

the consistent Christian. He sees them as those who are to serve his interests : to minister, perhaps, to his comforts ; to be convenient and useful to him : to increase his gains, to supply his wants : it may be, to gratify his pleasures. How differently does the believer in Christ Jesus regard the multitude of human beings by whom he is surrounded ! He sees them as immortal creatures, who may be among those for whom a heavenly kingdom is prepared. He sees them as persons in whom he has a near concern ; the same blood which was shed for him, was shed for them : and therefore everything which may affect their everlasting interests, whether for good or evil, every such thing becomes a matter which he is to consider.

See how this wrought in St. Paul's mind.* It was a question of the day, whether a Christian might lawfully eat of meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. No doubt he might, if in him it was no act of idolatry ; no part of idolatrous worship. But " take heed," he says, " lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to others ;" lest what you do innocently, they are led by your example to do idolatrously. " Through thy (better) knowledge shall the weak brother pe-

* 1 Cor. viii. 8—13.

rish, for whom Christ died?" Such a thing may happen. "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat whilst the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Such was his holy anxiety for others. He would not, even by a lawful indulgence, run the risk of injuring their souls.

But will this be sufficient for the Christian?⁵ Will he be contented not to injure? He must actively benefit. When a persecution took place against the church which was at Jerusalem, the disciples were forced to leave the city. But they that were thus dispersed through the country, carried their FAITH with them. And this faith so *wrought with their works*, that they could not remain barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We read, how "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word."

Faith cannot always show itself in the same manner; but it will always be animated by a like spirit, if it has life at all. A man will not keep to himself the blessing of which he feels the inestimable value. He will not leave his family, his dependents, to follow their own ways: he will guide them into the paths which he knows to be the paths of peace; he will instruct them, exhort them,

⁵ Acts viii. 2.

watch over them : he will provide that they have the means of public worship . he will endeavour to keep them in the fear of God by prayer at home : he will prove that he thinks nothing of such consequence as their everlasting welfare : he will not suffer them to be careful and troubled about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful.

Brethren, the difference between a dead faith and a living faith is often seen, openly witnessed, in this particular. Persons may be met with who have for years paid no regard to the spiritual interests of others : their families have not been called to prayer ; perhaps have not been allowed time for divine worship in public. The state of the heathen lying in darkness and the shadow of death has never attracted their attention : they have aided no attempts to reclaim the sinful, to awaken the thoughtless, to instruct the ignorant at home.

But at length a change takes place. A domestic altar is raised. The Bible rests no longer on the shelf : it receives attention. The efforts of piety are encouraged and assisted. Habits of life are formed, with reference to their effect upon the soul. It becomes an evident thing that the main object now is the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And yet, perhaps, the subject of this change may

never have disbelieved the Gospel ; never doubted of the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. But what faith he had was dead, was inactive. Now it is quickened into life, and has become the mainspring of his conduct. It was barren, and lay upon his mind like a seed which lies upon sand or stone ; it remained there, but did not vegetate. Now the light of the Spirit has reached it ; now the Sun of righteousness has warmed it ; now the dews of heaven have moistened it ; now the ground is become fertile, and brings forth fruit, thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold.

Such was the faith of Abraham, which *wrought with his works*. Such must all faith be which justifies and saves : all such faith as God will accept now, as Christ will recognise at last. It must not be a barren faith, or it is “ dead, being alone.” It must be energetic and active, and fruitful in good works. “ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

Let no one, therefore, be afraid to examine the practice of his life, as well as the assurance of his heart, for evidence that he is “ in Christ Jesus.” Let no one confound this with legality or self-righteousness. St. James, as we perceive by the text,

requires such self-inquiry. St. John supports him ; of whose first and chief epistle the greater portion is employed in describing the proofs by which we may “ know that we are of the truth,” and may therefore “ have confidence before God.”⁶ St. Paul practised the same examination : and declares, “ Our rejoicing is this ; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”⁷ Paul did not value himself on this course of life, or depend on it for justification. We know how studiously he deprecates such thoughts, both for himself and others. And, whatever may be supposed, they who have been led by the Spirit most carefully to watch over themselves, to govern their inward desires by the principles of the Gospel, and to bring their active habits “ to the obedience of Christ,” they will be the persons who will most gladly claim another and a better righteousness than their own. To *perfect our faith* by our works, is not to take a deed of charity, or a deed of justice, or a habit of devotion, or a habit of temperance, and place them in the scale together with faith, and so make out the weight which God demands. This is no more like the idea of salvation which Scripture presents, than the

⁶ John iii. 19—21.

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 12.

word of God is like the word of man. The Christian's language is uniform and consistent: God forbid that I should depend on anything save on the cross of the Lord Jesus. Still God forbid that I should depend upon his cross, unless by it "the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world:"⁸ unless I give all diligence, that I may not "be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ:"⁹ unless I show by my habits what is written on my heart, and "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."¹⁰ For I am expressly assured, that not every one who calleth Christ, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven."

⁸ Gal. vi. 14.⁹ 2 Pet. i. 8.¹⁰ Gal. ii. 20.

SERMON II.

BENEFICENCE THE DUTY OF THE RICH.

1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

It appears from this passage that there were among the Christians, at the time when Paul wrote his letters, *those that are rich in this world.*

Yet our Lord had said, to a wealthy young man who visited and consulted him, “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven.”¹ And we are told concerning others, who first embraced the christian faith, that they “were together, and had all things common: and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”²

Yet now, after the lapse of a few years, St. Paul gives directions such as might be given at the present day: such as prove to us, if proof were needful, that the christian faith was never intended to bring all that profess it to a level, and that the christian character is shown, not by renouncing the gifts of God, but by using them in obedience to his will. Whilst the small body of believers made one company in the midst of a city which was opposed to them, and all were engaged in some mode or other of propagating the truth which they had received, they must needs “have all things common:” like a party of emigrants, who throw their possessions into a common stock, and so provide for the expense of a tedious voyage. But when they arrive at the promised land, the family is no longer one; it resolves itself into its separate parts; and each individual settles on his own allotment. So it was with the family of early Christians: their faith did not alter their civil

¹ Mark x. 21. ² Acts ii. 44, 45. See also iv. 34—37.

condition, it did not make the poor rich, or the rich poor: the relations of life remained unchanged, except that all had new duties, and new motives to fulfil them.

And here St. Paul, with great plainness and fulness, declares the duties incumbent upon that class which must exist in every civilised community: the class possessing a larger share of this world's good than can ever belong to the greater multitude. He warns them of their peculiar dangers: he reminds them of their peculiar duties.

It would be difficult to find a passage more important or more applicable to the state of society in which we are living.

I. 1. And, first, of the dangers connected with wealth. *Charge them that are rich in the world, that they be not high-minded.*

To produce the spirit which is here condemned is the natural tendency of riches. To possess that which comparatively few possess. to possess that which is the general object of aim and desire: to possess that which affords the means of enjoying those things which are commonly valued and admired,—this will make a man *high-minded*, unless religious care and divine grace counteract the danger. The thoughts which tend to elevate must be repressed

by thoughts which humiliate: by comparing the degree of thankfulness which is due from those who have much of this world's good, with the thankfulness which is actually felt and paid: and by the habitual recollection of the account which those to whom much is given, must render to the giver. The richest man will not "glory in his riches," if he remembers that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of God," to be reckoned with for the talents committed to our charge.

2. Secondly, the rich are warned not *to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*

Were our nature an uncorrupt nature, earthly blessings would raise the heart to God their author. As it is, their effect is too often to divert it from him: so that men depend on riches: depend on them for their happiness: make them their first object; think them their chief good. It might be asked, who can really *trust in riches*? Trust in anything so fleeting, so unsubstantial, so unsatisfying? Yet do we not see that riches were the real trust of him, who, when Jesus invited him to sell what he had, and come and follow him, "was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions."³ It is plain that he did

³ Mark x. 21, 22.

that, which Job rejoiced in having been preserved from doing : that he “ made gold his hope, and said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence.”⁴ He would not place his dependence upon Christ, that he might have treasure in heaven : he did place his dependence upon riches, when, rather than part with them, he renounced all hope beyond. It is this which is forbidden, this *trust in riches*. We may possess that which we do not trust in. We may use gold, and yet not make gold our confidence ; we may enjoy wealth, whilst we rely on Him from whom wealth comes : just as the christian soldier may wield the weapons of war, whilst he looks for victory to God alone. David advancing against the Philistine, used the sling and stone, the weapons to which he had been accustomed. But he did not trust in them. What he really trusted in, he had before declared to Saul : “ The Lord will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”⁵ And so a man may use the wealth belonging to him, whilst his heart is neither set on it nor on the advantages it procures, but habitually turns to God, *as giving him all things richly to enjoy*.

II. From warning, the text proceeds to precept.

⁴ Job xxxi. 24.

⁵ 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

In a world like ours, there will always be occasion for this employment of wealth. There will always be some whom sudden reverses and unforeseen changes reduce to poverty. There will always be children whose parents have been prematurely taken from them. There will always be widows suffering under a double loss, the loss of the means of subsistence as well as the means of happiness. There will always be many naked to be clothed, many hungry to be fed, many sick and afflicted to be relieved. "The poor shall never cease throughout the land." And these the Lord commends to the care of those who *are rich in this world*. "Inasmuch as ye do it unto these my brethren, ye do it unto me."

God deals with his people in this matter as a rich man might deal with the heir to whom he bequeathed his fortune. To the deed which assigned him the inheritance, he might annex words to this effect: There are many dear to me, for whom I have made no special provision. There are numerous dependents who have served me faithfully for many years, and whom I should grieve to think were suffering under privations

when I was no longer in the world. I would not divide my fortune into even portions, that each of them might have a separate share. I had rather trust to the judgment of my heir to assign them a provision. He will look to their individual cases, and supply what is needful to them. Whatever he enjoys, he receives from me. This he will remember. My wish will be a law to him : and my wish is, that if he “ see his brother have need,” he do not “ shut up his bowels of compassion from him.”

Such is the case of the possessor of this world's good. God has *given him all things richly to enjoy*. And, at the same time, he has instructed him to be *rich in good works* : not to “ withhold the poor from their desire, or cause the eye of the widow to fail.”⁶ It is in his power to neglect or evade the precept. So, under the circumstances supposed, it is in the power of the heir to find some pretext why he should neglect the charge entrusted to him. He could not be legally punished, by a human tribunal, for so neglecting it. But he would be morally guilty, and he would be morally if not legally condemned. He would show a degree of selfish ingratitude which would be visited with heavy censure by general opinion.

⁶ Job xxxi. 16.

And yet this is the exact case of the man *rich in this world*, who does “make gold his confidence,” and *trusts not in the living God*; who is not *ready to distribute, willing to communicate. God has given him richly to enjoy*: and at the same time has commanded him to act towards his fellow-men as he would that they should act towards himself: to “give to him that asks, hoping for nothing again:” to “do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith:”⁷ to use the gifts entrusted to him as a steward who must give account. If he takes to himself the benefit, and fails to discharge the attendant obligation, what is he but the unfaithful steward, the ungrateful heir?

But here an objection must be met, which would lay the axe to the root of all such charity. Such employment of wealth, it is said, encourages indolence, and perpetuates the wants which it is intended to relieve. It rewards improvidence, and prevents exertion.

The answer is, that, as the world is constituted, there will always be calamity which no prudence could avoid, and wants which no caution could remove. Without doubt, an attempt to “have all things common” would preclude exertion. The

⁷ Luke vi. 30—35; Gal. vi. 10.

early Christians were only so maintained, whilst the usual modes of revenue were closed against them. The Israelites were supported by manna sent from heaven, only during the season when their own industry could avail them nothing. A certain and regular supply would soon cease to benefit the receiver. If any one, for instance, comparing his own abundance with the scanty fare of those around him, were to double by an indiscriminate donation the current wages of the labourers in his neighbourhood, he would soon find that he had not really bettered their condition.⁸ Labour, and the average return for labour, is a part of the machinery by which a community is carried on, and cannot be safely meddled with. Whilst we attempt to regulate one wheel, we set other wheels in motion of which we had not known the power, and the result is confusion. So that the rich man who is *ready to communicate*, must watch for opportunities : and he will not be long in finding much that he can do safely as well as kindly : he may smooth the bed of pain, he may soften the pillow of disease, he may add to the comforts of old age, he may relieve the widow, and be a father

⁸ For two reasons. The regular employers of labour would reduce their payments, and fresh labourers would crowd into the favoured district.

to the fatherless : and if he dares not augment the regular reward of labour, he may increase, without danger, the economical dole of public charity. Those gifts are injurious which may be securely reckoned on or confidently claimed : which fall like the morning dew, or the early and latter rain, on every spot alike. But when they descend like the summer shower, they cause the field which is rained upon to flourish, and yet the piece that is not rained upon does not wither. This universal truth was proved even in that short interval, during which the destitute Christians were supported by those richer at Jerusalem. A blight came with the supply ; and “ there arose a murmuring.”⁹ Very different was the effect when assistance was sent by the brethren in Antioch to the Christians in Judea.¹ It relieved an occasional dearth, in which many must have fallen victims to famine ; and the good offices on the one side produced nothing but thankful feelings on the other.

III. And now the reason follows why they who *are rich in this world* should be charged to be *rich in good works*. It is, that they may *lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come : that they may lay hold on eternal life*.

⁹ Acts vi. 1.

¹ Acts vi. 26—30.

The apostle has here joined together two ideas which are not commonly united : he has spoken of a *foundation* as a thing *laid up in store*. And he has spoken well : for the performance of the good works which he recommends, “ acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,”² does provide a man with the surest store, a treasure which he will hereafter need : it establishes him on an immovable *foundation* : the foundation on which that man is placed, who has heard the sayings of Christ, and lived according to them. The Lord has left it written, “ Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock.”³ This, then, is his *foundation against the time to come* ; against the hour of death and the day of judgment : this his store against futurity. The man who has “ heard the sayings of Christ,” warning him against covetousness, and exhorting him to liberality, and yet has never set himself to *do good, to be rich in good works* : that man may indulge hope : may have a vague dependence on the mercy of God and the merits of Christ Jesus : but he has no *good foun-*

² 1 Pet. ii. 4.³ Matt. vii. 24.

dation : his hopes have nothing to rest on ; no solid ground in reason or in Scripture. Not that there is any foundation for eternal life except that is laid, the blood of the everlasting covenant. " Other foundation can no man lay." ⁴ And certainly St. Paul would not be the teacher to attempt it, whose uniform language is, " By grace are ye saved ; not of works, lest any man should boast." ⁵ We do not, therefore, lay this as our foundation, that we have been *rich in good works* : but these good works prove that we have a foundation to stand upon, when we profess our trust in Jesus Christ : they show the solidity, the substantial reality, of our faith : they grow out of that vital union which must subsist between Christ and his true people. When faith leads to these works, it is " made perfect : " ⁶ it reaches that point which it was intended to attain. It effects a present sacrifice for the sake of a future reward. And thus we *lay hold on eternal life*. We do not merely admire it at a distance, as a thing to be desired, and let it pass by us, as too remote to be attained : but make it, so to speak, our own.

Brethren, this text lays down the duty belonging to that class of persons who *are rich in this world*,

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

⁵ Eph. ii. 9.

⁶ James ii. 22.

and who “ profess and call themselves Christians.” It is the rule which he whose name they bear has left for their instruction. If they adhere to it, they complete the design of his Gospel. If they neglect it, they frustrate his will, as far as in them lies. For it is by this distribution of the gifts of fortune that his promises are to be made good : it is through the care of those to whom much is given, that the righteous shall be never forsaken, nor his seed found begging their bread : that the wants of God’s people are supplied, as surely as their food to the fowls of the air : and that all needful things are added to them that seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.⁷ We are expressly assured that such is his design ; and that with this intent he divides to every man his talents, severally as he will.⁸ After a time the Lord cometh, and reckoneth with his servants. Will it be a satisfactory account to render, in the words of Solomon,⁹ Lord, “ I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards : I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits : I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees : I got me servants and maid-

⁷ Matt. vi. 27—32.

⁸ Matt. xxv. 15, &c.

⁹ See Eccl. ii. 4—9.

ens ; I got me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in the land."

Alas ! brethren, if this, and no other, is the *foundation laid up in store*, it is no good treasure *against the time to come*. Will not the Lord of that servant say, "Thou knewest" that I had charged thee to be *rich in good works*. Thou hast been rich only "to thyself." "Thou knewest" that I had enjoined thee to *do good and to communicate*. Thou hast provided for thine own. "Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."¹⁰

For the "unprofitable servant" there is "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

¹⁰ Matt xxv. 29.

SERMON III.

EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY.

1 Cor. xiii. 13.

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three :
but the greatest of these is charity.*

THERE can be no stronger proof of the sincerity of the apostle Paul, than is contained in this description of charity. Those to whom the business of spreading the Gospel was committed, were at that time endued with powers which raised them much above their fellow-creatures ; the gift of languages, the gift of prophecy, the gift of miracles. In this way alone could the infant church be raised and brought up : in no other way could the small seed, scattered by a few obscure persons, take root and spread its branches far and wide, that all nations might find shelter under them. The Acts of the

Apostles show us how these gifts were used. The gift of languages was exhibited on the day of Pentecost; the gift of prophecy, when Peter read the heart of Ananias and Sapphira; the gift of miracles, when the cripple who had lain for years at the gate of the temple, was told, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to rise and walk.

Now we might have expected that such unusual powers would have made those who possessed them proud. We find that very inferior gifts have often that effect now; that the gift of prayer or the gift of preaching may be more profitable to others than to him who exercises them, and sometimes tend to excite an unholy spirit of pride and vanity. But how different is the example of St. Paul! He lowers these remarkable gifts, which belonged to apostles alone, and to men of that day; and raises beyond them the gift of a christian spirit of love and charity, which ought to belong, not to apostles alone, but to every one in every age who names the name of Christ. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."¹

¹ 1—3.

At last he says, *and now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.*

This assertion may at first surprise us. We are accustomed, and rightly accustomed, to treat faith as the essential part of the christian character, without which, in truth, no other part can exist; the groundwork and foundation of the whole building. And we are accustomed, and rightly accustomed, to consider all the christian graces as united together, equally needful and valuable, and like limbs of the same body, not one to be prized above another. But here St. Paul does make a comparison; does place one before another; and affirms that both faith and hope yield to charity.

All Scripture is written by inspiration of God: and only comes out more clearly from what may at first seem a difference or an inconsistency.

It may, therefore, prove interesting, if I attempt to show, first, what the apostle means by FAITH; next, by HOPE; and then, thirdly, why he gives the preference to CHARITY.

1. Faith is here spoken of in its general sense,¹ not according to its peculiar evangelical meaning,

¹ See verse 2.

as justifying faith, or saving faith, in Christ as the Redeemer : but as such reliance on the promises of God as is described in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews : trust in his word : belief of all that he has declared. It is a belief, for example, of all that we repeat in our creed, as a summary of what is revealed to us in the Bible. And farther, considered in its operation on the heart, it is the belief of these things as applying to ourselves : a belief in God, as our own God : a belief in Christ, as our Redeemer ; in the Holy Ghost, as our Sanctifier ; a belief in the world to come, as what we are born for, and towards which we are daily fast proceeding. This is FAITH : and of such faith who can speak too greatly ? What can it not perform ? “ All things are possible to him that believeth.” It was such faith, which made Abraham, at the call of God, resign his son, his only son Isaac, the son of his old age whom he loved, the son through whom the promise had been given, that “ in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” Abraham surrendered this son at the command of God : and that, not only from obedient resignation : not only because he felt that God, who had given, had also a right to take away :—he was filled with faith as well as resignation : and had an

inward confidence that God would still perform his promise, even if it could only be performed by raising up Isaac from the dead.²

It was this faith which made St. Paul declare — although he knew by the Holy Spirit “ that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him,” — “ None of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.”³ It is this faith, my brethren, and nothing else, which can make any man quit what is most dear to him : this faith, and nothing else, can make him quit his pride and self-righteousness, and look for salvation through his Saviour’s merits, not his own : this faith, and nothing else, can make him contend against his guilty habits, and forsake his ungodly practices, and fashion his life by the rule of the Gospel ; through this faith alone will he abandon that which is highly valued in the world, “ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” and follow the pattern of him who was meek and lowly in heart. Through FAITH this is done ; faith in a heavenly recompense. Through want of faith it is not done ; not done by any as it should and would be, if their practice were consistent with their profession : by too many, not done at all, or attempted at all, any more than

² Heb. xi 19.

³ Acts xx. 24.

by him who left the Saviour “sorrowing, because he had many possessions.”

Let us say with the disciples, “Lord, increase our faith:” for how else can we overcome the world, subdue the flesh, or beat down Satan under our feet? “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;” and in proportion as that evidence is clear and strong to our minds, the power of things seen, things temporal, to engage and to mislead us, will be less and less pernicious and destructive.

2. The other christian grace which St. Paul here compares with charity, is HOPE. Hope grows out of faith. There may be a sort of faith without hope. Such is the mournful character of hell: “the devils believe and tremble:” but hope never comes nigh them. On the other hand, there cannot be hope without faith. “He that cometh to God, must first believe that he is.” “He that obeys the word of God, must first credit that it is his word, and will be certainly fulfilled. Thus faith and hope work together in the Christian’s mind. We believe, for instance, that Jesus Christ came into the world “to give his life a ransom:” that “as many as believe in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is *faith*. But

when we trust to be saved ourselves by his sacrifice, and to possess an individual interest in his mediation, this is *hope*. We believe that God has prepared for them that love him such good things as pass man's understanding. But it was hope, personal hope, which taught St. Paul to exclaim, "There is laid up for me, even for me, a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." By faith Noah built an ark to the saving of his family. By hope he entered it, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up. By faith we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. But by hope we dry up the tears of affliction, "sorrowing not as those that are without hope:" not without hope that they whose body we commit to the ground, will be raised again at the last day to meet the Saviour whom they believed and trusted; and "so will ever be with the Lord." Such is hope; which St. Paul justly terms "the anchor of the soul;"⁴ that which makes it sure and stedfast, able to bear the winds of temptation and the waves of trouble. For as the anchor, fixed at once upon the ship, and fixed upon the rock on which it is cast, holds the vessel secure and firm, though the storm beats

⁴ Heb. vi. 19.

against its side ; so does hope, fixed at once within the soul, and upon the everlasting world to come, preserve the Christian's heart safe in trial, firm in temptation, and calm in affliction. Hope supports and cheers him, and strengthens him to endure unto the end. This leads St. Paul in one place to say, " we are saved by hope ;"⁵ i. e. were it not for hope, we should yield to our spiritual enemies, and so faint by the way. Faith shows us the path of salvation, and leads us into it : but hope enables us, in spite of all labours and discouragements, to persevere and continue in the road.

Such are FAITH and HOPE. Blessed are the hearts in which they are found ; found together. Faith without hope is wretchedness : and hope without faith is ignorance or error : but scriptural faith, and scriptural hope in the promises of the Gospel, form a rational and efficient ground of action, able to lift the soul above the paltry cares and unsatisfying pleasures of this life, and fix its affections on things above. They strengthen the Christian to say, when encompassed by temptation, " We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." They strengthen him to say, in the day of sorrow, " Nay, we glory in afflictions also." They strengthen him

⁵ Rom. viii. 24.

to say, in the darkest hours, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

3. And yet, my brethren, great as these qualities are, still of the three jewels which adorn the Christian's crown, there is one even brighter than these. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: and the greatest of these is charity.*

We may well proceed to inquire what is this charity, of which so much is here said. Charity is that spirit which grows out of the Gospel, and belongs to the believers in the Gospel alone: a spirit of meekness; of humility; of courtesy; of kindness; of self-denial; of active love, which exerts itself to relieve both the spiritual and temporal wants of every fellow-creature. This spirit, this temper, this state of heart, St. Paul assures us, is greater than even faith or hope. But observe his reason: for it is no part of sound truth or teaching, to raise one christian duty or one christian quality above another. All are parts of the same system; all unite to form one character: and if one be wanting, the character is defective, and the whole building weakened, and ready to fall.

But charity is greater than faith or hope, not

because hope is of little value, or faith can be dispensed with now : but because charity will remain, when faith is perfected and hope has reached its end. “ Charity never faileth :” not even in that heavenly kingdom towards which we are now endeavouring to speed our way on the wings of faith and hope. For charity, you observe, is the christian state of heart : it is the spirit which pervades and fills the Christian’s soul, and is the evidence of its renewal by the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. Now this spirit survives the grave ; is no more designed to be extinguished than the soul itself : it is the very spirit which the whole revelation of the Gospel is meant to form ; to form and exercise in this preparatory stage of being, that it may be made perfect and exist for ever in the kingdom of heaven.⁶

On the other hand, faith and hope belong to this present world alone. They are, as it were, the sails and the oars which carry us forward to the wished-for port ; but when the mariner has reached the haven where he would be, he lays by his oars and takes down his sails. Faith is the evidence of things not seen as yet ; but when those things are seen actually, there will be no more need of faith

⁶ See Gal. v. 13. Col. iii. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 1 John iv. 7—9.

to show them us. Hope is the prospect of something future, the anticipation of joy to come hereafter; but what a man has, he ceases to hope for; he is no longer in expectation, but in possession.

We shall see this more plainly if we try it by example, and illustrate these several graces in their actual exercise. Scripture tells us, for instance, concerning the patriarch Enoch, in short but pregnant terms—first, that he “walked with God:” and then, that “God took him.”⁷ Now whilst Enoch walked with God on earth, he walked by faith, i. e. he believed that there is an invisible God, the “rewarder of them that diligently seek him:” therefore, instead of prizing the perishable goods of this present world, he sought “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” But when God took him, and admitted him to the glories of that place where He is from everlasting, there was no further need of *faith*; no more exercise of *hope*: what before he had believed in his heart and hoped for, he now knew by the evidence of his senses: and he might exclaim, in the words of Job, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.” Before I

⁷ Gen. v. 24.

saw “ as through a glass, darkly ; but now I know, even as also I am known.”

We have another example of the power of faith and hope in the account of the martyr Stephen. We read that Stephen, rebuking the prejudices and unbelief of his countrymen who had rejected and crucified the Prince of Life, so inflamed their evil passions, that they rose up in unrestrained violence, and put him to instant death. This he submitted to in faith, believing the promise of Christ, that whosoever should lose his life for his sake, should find it ; find life eternal. But we are also told that the last moments of this first victim in the cause of christian truth, were strengthened by unusual encouragement. “ Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly unto heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God : and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”⁸ This was no longer faith, but sight : he was allowed an actual vision of that indescribable glory, which he had trusted to and hoped for on the word of the Redeemer.

Enoch, then, and Stephen—(I use them as examples—but the same is true of all the people of

⁸. Acts vii. 56.

Christ, for it is the character of all that they “walk by faith, and not by sight:”)—Enoch and Stephen, when received within the gate of heaven, would lay aside that faith and hope by which they had been enabled to attain it—as Elijah, when taken from his earthly duties to his heavenly recompense, cast his mantle down to encourage his successor,⁹ who was still for a time to “know but in part, and to prophesy in part” on earth. But together with their FAITH and HOPE,—faith now changed for vision, and hope for enjoyment—would they also lay aside their CHARITY? Would Enoch lose that spirit of lowliness and self-denial, which preferred the walking with God to the pleasures or profits of the world? Would Stephen lose that brotherly-kindness, that patient and forgiving temper, which breathed in his last words, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?” No, my brethren, charity never faileth: for this is the very spirit of heaven, where all is love; this is the very spirit which suits the presence of God, for God is love: this is the wedding-garment worn at “the marriage-supper of the Lamb:” this is the white robe that shall adorn the saints for ever.

Here then we perceive the reason why CHARITY

⁹ 2 Kings ii. 13,

has so high a place in the apostle's estimation. It abideth for ever. It is the state of mind which is fit for heaven : the temper which shall never fail, but remain in " the spirits of just men made perfect."

But there is still another reason, which belongs to the present time. It is the proof and evidence of that faith and hope which are the foundations on which we rest. It is the proof that the faith is real, and the hope scriptural. A man (says St. James) may " say he hath faith;" but he must prove it by his practice. A man may hope for eternal life; but he may deceive himself: unless he gives a reason of the hope which is in him. And charity, in all its extensive character; charity, which suffers long, and is kind; charity, which is gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works: charity, which denies itself, that it may bless and comfort others—charity is the proof, because it is the fruit, of genuine faith and reasonable hope. By charity we show that we are believing Him who warns us, " Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal—but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." By charity, we show that we " are not vainly hoping

for a heavenly kingdom, while our hearts are set on things below :” that we are not following the example of him who was “ rich to himself,” but not “ rich in good works,” not “ rich towards God.”

Charity, no doubt, is not a deed, or a collection of deeds ; we must not so mistake it : it is a disposition, a state of heart—and St. Paul’s description of it has shown especial care that we should not be allowed to misunderstand its nature. But a part of it, a very important part, is the relieving the various wants of our fellow-creatures. It is impossible that there should be faith in Christ Jesus, whose whole dispensation is a dispensation of love, without the exercise of active and habitual charity. If the truths of the Gospel are received into the heart, the practice of charity will spring from them. As the fruits of the earth spring up of course out of a rich and fertile soil, when watered by the dews of heaven, so will the fruits of love and mercy proceed out of faith in Christ, and establish the Christian’s hope on a sure foundation. If the fruit be not there, neither is the root there. And if the fruit is not there, what says the heavenly husbandman ? “ Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?”

Remember, therefore, brethren, that the state of mind which is to accompany the soul when it

leaves this world, must be formed and established here. It is here that we are to “suffer long, and be kind:” here not to “seek our own,” but others’ benefit: here to “do good, and to communicate” the blessings we enjoy: here to pity the distresses and relieve the wants of others; here to show that we love our neighbour as ourselves, by sparing upon ourselves that we may assist our neighbour.

Examine yourselves, therefore, and see how far this spirit is yours: examine, also, whether any opposite spirit exists in you, and is suffered to remain. Is there any of that covetousness which is ever on the watch for an advantage? That selfishness which never concedes a claim? Any of that indifference to the state of others, which allows a Lazarus to lie neglected at the gate? Any of that apathy which can rest and slumber whilst a multitude of fellow-creatures are perishing “for lack of knowledge?”

Certainly this is not charity;—and if not charity, not Christianity—for Christianity is charity—that charity which is to spring up here, though in an ungenial soil, that it may flourish for ever in its native heaven.

Judge yourselves, therefore, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Charity, indeed, is not the foundation of your hope. God forbid. But it is

the test, according to which your title to hope must be examined. There must be a ground for scriptural hope, there must be a result of legitimate faith. The result of that faith, the ground of that hope, must be a heart renewed and purified; a heart of which the character is CHARITY. The substance of things hoped for must be so present to you, the evidence of things not seen must have taken such hold upon your minds, as to lead you to value things of earth only in proportion as they may secure to you an everlasting habitation, eternal in the heavens. Faith has not purified and sanctified your hearts, as they must be purified and sanctified, unless you are endued with that love of which your Master and great Exemplar set the wonderful and inimitable pattern: unless he send his Holy Spirit, and pour into your hearts that most excellent gift of CHARITY, without which HOPE is groundless and FAITH is vain.

SERMON IV.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE CONSTRAINING MOTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

2 Cor. v. 14.

For the love of Christ constraineth us : because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they who live might no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.

IN a book of familiar letters lately published, though written sixty years ago, I meet with this description of a young person, who afterwards became well known in the religious world.

“She was bred up in all the pride of life ; her father being one of the chief merchants in London. By the grace of God, at the age of sixteen she renounced the world from her heart, and gave up herself to the Lord. Since then she has educated and pre-

pared for service seventy-four destitute young females, and seen them placed out to her satisfaction : and instead of conforming to all the vain pursuits and expensive customs of the world, she has been wholly employed in doing good.”¹

Now, when I read an account of this kind, I perceive at once that this is not an ordinary life : and I perceive that there must be some motive, some strong feeling prevailing in the mind, which led to it, and maintained it.

That motive, that prevailing sentiment, is explained by the apostle in the text. It was that by which he himself was actuated. He had been brought in the course of his epistle to describe his own manner of life ; the exertions he was using ; his zeal, his perseverance, his self-denial, his abandonment of all things present. He felt within himself that this was not a natural or ordinary mode of acting : that an impulse must lead to it, a motive sustain it. And this brings him to explain the impelling cause and the sustaining motive to his christian friends. I thus act, he writes, in conformity with the faith which I profess. My conduct is the necessary effect of that faith upon my life and character. *For the love of Christ*

¹ Miss Bosanquet, afterwards Mrs. Fletcher. See Venn's Memoirs.

constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Such, brethren, is the bearing of that truth which we all avow, upon the heart and conduct. The principle is easy to understand. We see at once, that whosoever has received an important benefit from another, is placed towards that person in a new and peculiar relation. Suppose the case of one preserved from impending death at the risk of another's life. Such a transaction may have an effect upon all his remaining days. But suppose the deliverance to have taken place under the most remarkable circumstances; with the most deliberate self-devotion; and not only at the risk, but at the cost of life: the person rescued at this price, would no longer feel that he was his own, no longer consider himself free to act or not to act, in any case where he might show his sense of the obligation. Towards the surviving friends, towards the children, towards any object dear to his preserver, he would have no choice: love, gratitude, would *constrain* him to promote their interests at any cost, or by any labour. And if we can imagine that his widow were left friendless, or his children destitute, and he, possessing ample means,

allowed them to remain under privations, no language would be too strong to express the general feeling of wonder at such ingratitude.

No comparison is here pretended. *The love of Christ* admits of no comparison. But this illustrates St. Paul's meaning when he says, *For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.* If that is true, which is the acknowledged basis of the Gospel, " that Christ once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God : " it follows, of course, that *all were dead* ; all were in that state, which Scripture represents as a state of death, because no other term so fully describes it ; all were lying under God's wrath and indignation, and condemned by his sentence ; all were his " enemies through wicked works," and " dead in trespasses and sins."

And hence the consequent obligation. *We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live, might live no longer unto themselves, but unto him that died for them.* We judge that the love which he showed in redeeming us from death at the price of his own blood, places us in a reciprocal relation towards him, which gives the tone and colour to our whole existence. From the time when " the

eyes of our understanding being enlightened," we become sensible of the fact, that if we are not "enemies of God," it is because Christ has reconciled us; that if we are "not appointed unto wrath," it is because he has "wrought out salvation for us;" that if we have any spiritual life, it is because "he hath quickened us;" that if we have any eternal hope, it is because he hath purchased it for us: from the time when this truth obtains possession of our hearts, we have a motive for action with which we should not be otherwise affected, we have a rule of life by which we should not otherwise be guided. In a word, *we live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us.*

Such is the principle which actuates those who "live by the faith of the Son of God." St. Paul says that it was the principle by which he was governed. *The love of Christ constrains us:* constrains us, too, not as apostles, but as Christians. The principle of the text is the principle of every Christian. *If one died for all, then were all dead: and all who live, live no longer unto themselves.* To deny the obligation would be to disclaim the benefit; to be yet under sin, and the sentence which condemns sin. If we are not absolved through the blood of Christ, we are not absolved

at all : “ for there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby we may be saved.” And if we “ have peace with God” through “ the blood of the covenant,” then the obligation lies upon us ; “ we are bought with a price,” “ we are not our own,” and are bound to “ glorify God with our body and our spirit, which are his.”

I. Observe, then, first the way of life which the Christian does not follow. *We live no longer unto ourselves.*

What it is *to live to ourselves* we easily understand. It is to follow our natural inclinations ; the dictates of that natural or carnal heart, which is “ enmity with God ;” which pleases, serves, consults itself, and follows no other rule, regards no other interest. The rich man, who enjoyed his own wealth and luxury, and paid no heed to Lazarus at his gate, shows what it is for a man to live to himself.² The unjust judge is another specimen ; who, even when he acted rightly, considered only his own ease.³ Though I fear not God, nor regard man ; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Alas ! brethren, need I describe what it is to

² Luke xvi. 25.

³ Luke xviii. 5.

live unto ourselves! We see too much in the world to explain and represent it. Why is it that the description of character with which I began, is an uncommon case? Because it is an uncommon case to act as our religion would demand: to make the truths of our creed the rule of conduct. All of us have much reason to watch and pray, lest we be drawn into the same snare, and so live, as if the being conformed to this world was conformity to Christ, as if the living to Him was to enjoy ourselves, to take our ease, and pursue our pleasures here.

II. As we understand what it is *to live to ourselves*, so we also understand the *living to another*. We see it in the mother, who is nursing a beloved child, when every personal comfort is given up, every labour readily undergone; and the only thought is, what may relieve or gratify the dear object of her attention. She lives not to herself. It may be justly and truly said. The phrase is not too strong. The same may be said of the father, who lives to his family; rises early, and late takes rest, that he may provide for their interests and well-being. So, too, the soldier: he lives to his commander: uniformly studies to please him, is instantly ready to obey

him. So too the patriot : he lives to his country, when his principal concern is to promote his country's good, when for his country's sake he foregoes his own ease or pleasure.

These show us, by their example, what it is to live not to ourselves. And thus it is, that in whatever station of life he may be, whatever public or private duties he is fulfilling, the Christian is still living to Christ, the redeemed to the Redeemer. *The love of Christ constrains* him to desire that Christ may be glorified, as the patriot desires the honour of his country. *The love of Christ constrains him* to seek and obey his will, as the soldier follows his commander's order. *The love of Christ constrains him* to promote his interests, as the father pursues the interests of his family : to do his pleasure, as they who love on earth anticipate the wishes of those to whom their attachment has devoted them.

For *thus he judges*, thus he reckons with himself. There is a principle, a clear principle, from which his conduct springs. That *Christ died for all*, is the first truth of our religion. If, then, he died for all, he died for me : and from him I derive it, if I have any spiritual life ; and to him I owe it, if I have any future hope, if I look for anything when summoned from this world, except

to be “shut out from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.” And does no duty, no consequence, no obligation, result from this? If we are not our own, are we to act as if we were our own? This can never be: and therefore the apostle says, *We live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us*: we make his will our rule; his interests our concern; his glory our principal desire.

But here it may be asked, are not these mere words, and nothing more? Can it be that the Redeemer should have interests which we can serve? Can his people promote his glory?

Indeed, brethren, these are not mere empty words. Mysterious as it is, the Redeemer has a will which we can execute, has interests which we can assist, and has a desire which may be fulfilled by us. He has a will, for instance, regarding ourselves. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem unto himself a peculiar people, living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world, and looking for his heavenly kingdom. We live to him, therefore, when we live as such a peculiar people; mortifying the evil desires which would otherwise prevail, and striving to bring every thought and word and work into captivity to

the obedience which we owe him. Those of whom Paul complains, and over whose state he weeps, who, “minding earthly things,” turned the grace of God into licentiousness:⁴ those, instead of living to him, crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. They, on the other hand, who study to walk even as he walked; to be holy, as he who hath called them is holy; to purify themselves even as he is pure; and so to become meet for the inheritance which he has purchased for them: they *live to him*, because they live as he desires; they allow him to “see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;” they answer his merciful design of “bringing many sons to glory.”

Examine yourselves, brethren, as to the testimony of your own consciences in this point: how far the course of your private lives is so ordered as to be pleasing to Him who loved you, and gave himself for you; how far you are answering the text which he has left to prove our faithfulness, “If a man love me, he will keep my words.”

It is, however, in his conduct towards other men, that the constraining power which influences the Christian is seen to act most visibly and pecu-

⁴ See Phil. iii. 18.

liarily. The love of Christ exercised towards himself, the mercy of Christ extended to all mankind, give him new functions to perform, and a new spirit to perform them in; the world is a different place to him, and he sees its inhabitants through another medium. The interests, the temporal and eternal interests, of all his fellow-creatures are set in a peculiar light before him. Were he as the heathen, "without Christ, and a stranger from the covenants of promise," he might look on other men as born to serve his advantage, or minister to his pleasures. But as a Christian, he looks upon them as a part of that world, for which Christ's blood was shed. They are made precious by the value of the sacrifice which has been offered for them. They are dear to Him, who is the author of all his own hope.—Are they poor? To the poor was the Gospel preached. Are they ignorant? The Scriptures may make them wise unto salvation. Are they young? Christ has said, Suffer little children to come unto me. Are they corrupt? There is fulness of grace with him, to renew their hearts after the image of him who created them. Are they depraved in habit, as well as corrupt by nature? Still he wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Whatever may be their condition,

high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, amiable or despicable, of this we are sure, that Christ desires their salvation; that he died for their salvation; that if they perish, then, so far, has his blood been shed in vain.

Such is the principle which is set before the Christian as his rule of action. He lives by Christ; by Christ only: therefore he *lives not unto himself*, but to the Lord *who died for him*.

My brethren, it is a principle of delight and comfort, no less than of bounden duty and truest interest. How many difficulties are thus removed! How many doubts resolved! How many labours smoothed! What a ready answer is supplied, when indolence would recommend that we consult our ease, when pride would shrink from some obvious duty, when natural will would counteract some suggestions of conscience:—" *We live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us.*" If we lived to ourselves, we might yield to the demands of self-indulgence. If we lived to ourselves, we might listen to the suggestions of pride: if we were our own, we might follow our own will, and then repent too late. But because we are Christ's, *the love of Christ constrains us*, and we cannot give to him who "gave himself for us," we cannot give to him

less than all. So that the principle which rules within, is practically seen throughout the life, operating and effective. We enter into the Christian's family: and we perceive that his household, his dependents, are not merely united with himself in mutual convenience and worldly interests, but are persons whose welfare, both temporal and eternal, he is concerned in and has at heart. Like Abraham, "he commands his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord."⁵ By leading them to prayer, by searching the Scriptures with them, he teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. No business prevents this, no pleasure interrupts it, no natural disposition precludes it. The love of Christ constrains him to postpone his worldly interests, to overcome his natural inclination; the love of Christ strengthens his weakness, and supplies his want of resolution. As the most timid animal is roused when its young, the objects dear to it, are endangered; so the weakest Christian becomes strong and able to do all things, when his heart is warmed and animated by the love of Christ.

We see him, again, on the Lord's day, not "doing his own pleasure, not speaking his own

⁵ Gen. xviii. 19.

words," often denying himself that which if he consulted his own gratification he might prefer, lest he should injure others, or lead them into error : lest in any way through him, a weak child of Adam might suffer loss, " for whom Christ died."

The same principle which actuates him in respect to his children and dependents, will carry him farther too. It will begin, there, with his own family, but it will not stop there. He whom he serves has a family beyond. The habits and the circumstances of that part of Christ's family which belongs to his neighbourhood, are matters in which he has a concern. These must be looked to and considered. It is a case in which his Lord's honour, his Lord's will is engaged, that none shall bear his name upon their lips, or his cross upon their foreheads, who do not also bear his faith upon their hearts. And, therefore, according to his means and opportunities, or rather as making means and opportunities for himself, he goes about doing good ; preventing evil, discouraging vice, supporting morality ; instructing ignorance, comforting affliction, cherishing piety, admonishing wickedness ; everywhere and in everything adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour.

And thus, christian brethren, I have set before

you the principle which must actuate our lives and conduct, if we mean to give a reasonable answer of the hope that is in us. If this is not our ground of action and our rule of living, the very faith which we profess becomes our condemnation. According to our faith, we owe it to Christ Jesus that we “are not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation.” When *all were dead, he died for all*. Must it not follow, when this is really felt, that *we live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us*? that we “present ourselves, our souls and bodies,” to the service of Him who hath “bought us with his own blood?”

O, brethren, let us not lay up a sad, but too just condemnation against ourselves. Let each consider how far his conduct, whether as concerns himself or others, is governed by this principle; let each consider, what as members of a community, what as members of a family, what in their neighbourhood, or among their dependents and friends, they can do for the glory of God, and the cause of Him by whom they do live, and for whom they ought to live. O let not the test, the proof of faith be wanting; let not the profession and the practice be at variance, the creed and the conduct opposite to each other! On the lips, we live to Him; in the character, we live to ourselves!

The religion of Christ is eminently a practical religion. Faith in him is not a speculative notion, but a principle of action. However beautifully framed or correctly defined, it has no real value, unless it sets the whole machinery of life in motion : unless it is made, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the vital principle of the soul, pervading, influencing, animating the whole man ; and leading him habitually to say ;—Lord, I am thine ;—I live by thee, and to thee ;—and my first desire is, to know “ what thou wouldest have me to do ;” how I may be best able to honour thee with my lips, and serve thee in my actions ; that there may never be reason to ask, “ Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?” ⁶

⁶ Luke vi. 46.

SERMON V.

POWER OF LOVE AS A PRINCIPLE OF ACTION.

John xiv. 15.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

IT is never wholesome or sound divinity to set up, as it were, one part of revealed truth against another ; so to extol one principle of the Gospel, however just, as to depress other principles which are equally founded on the word of God.

We find, for example, in this text, the fulfilling of the law enforced on a single ground, and suspended upon one motive. The Lord Jesus says, *If ye love me*. He does not say, if ye hope for eternal life,—if ye desire to escape the wrath of God,—if ye look for the recompense of reward,—but *if ye love me, keep my commandments*.

Yet it would be very unsafe and erroneous

teaching, if the preacher were to urge this as the sole motive to obedience, were to leave his people to the current of their feelings and the impulse of their love; instead of bringing their lives and practice to the written commandment and positive law, and comparing the one with the other.

Still it is remarkable how great a stress is laid, throughout the Gospel, upon this principle of love as the motive of obedience.

Our Lord himself represents it as a certain evidence of the state of the heart towards him: "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." So, when he would leave a solemn injunction to his apostle, his words are, "Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep. Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs."

St. Paul speaks of this principle as the mainspring of the Christian character: saying, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love." He prays for the Ephesians, "that they may be rooted and grounded in love;" and he rejoices over the Thessalonians, "because of their works of faith and labour of love."

The epistles of John, more particularly, abound

with various forms of the same argument; enforcing love of God, as the only return for his love towards ourselves; and requiring that this love be shown by an universal desire to fulfil his will. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him."

It appears, then, that the enforcement of the commandments, on the principle of love towards Him who issues them, is not confined to a sentence like the text, or to any one of the sacred writers, but is involved in the whole texture of the Gospel. The language of Christ is throughout, *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

And as we cannot mistake the fact, so neither can we be at a loss for the reason on which it proceeds. No other principle would be so universal—no other principle so influential.

I. No other principle would be so universal.

The ways can never be enumerated or set forth in order, in which a disciple of Christ may fulfil

his Master's will. They are infinitely various, and depend upon a multitude of circumstances which defy anticipation or description. They depend upon the state of society in which the Christian lives ; on the situation of life which he fills ; on the education which he receives ; on the abilities with which he is endued ; on the individuals with whom he comes in contact ; on the means and opportunities which he enjoys. " God divides to every man severally as he will ;" assigns him various powers, and various occasions of employing them. It could never be accurately defined on whom the different duties lie which the service of Christ requires ;—never laid down beforehand, for instance, to whom it particularly belongs to propagate at home the truths of the Gospel, or to carry them to foreign lands ; who are to visit the sick and afflicted, and supply the destitute ; what portion of his substance every different individual should employ in works of mercy and piety.

It was worthy of infinite wisdom, instead of attempting this—instead of promulgating a code too voluminous for ordinary use, and still imperfect and inadequate at last,—it was worthy of infinite wisdom to leave a general principle which should make such a code superfluous—a principle which should extend to all cases, belong to every age,

apply to every individual : *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

You know, my brethren, the nature of a piece of mechanism ; a work of art ingeniously contrived to perform certain operations ; and which does perform them, perhaps, with wonderful precision. But it can go no farther ; it cannot provide for contingencies, or take advantage of opportunities ; all must be regularly settled and previously planned. To this we might compare the heart, if it were solely governed by precept.

Whereas the heart, when actuated by a ruling principle, instead of by direct precept, is like that astonishing living mechanism, the human body. The body with its limbs and sinews, as constructed by the great Creator, is convertible to every object which the circumstances of man require ; and, instead of defining beforehand the achievements of which it is capable, we are daily surprised at the new powers which it discovers and exerts. There is a vital energy within, which moves every way, as inclination may direct or necessity require.

So then it is with the love of Christ, shed abroad in the Christian's heart. It is a vital energy within, which can act everywhere, and everywhere find an occasion of acting. Wherever the Christian is, his Master has a will, which,

wherever he is, he can endeavour to obey and serve. There may be, or there may not be, the letter of the law to demand. But there is the spirit of the law to direct, and the spirit of love to animate : and this universal spirit of love becomes the fulfilling of the law.

O, brethren, how it ennobles the heart, how it exalts the life of man, to be actuated by this principle ! to seek in everything the will, to study in everything the interests of our heavenly Lord ! And yet, remember, the spring, the source of this, the love of Christ towards ourselves, however deeply felt or intimately known, still passeth knowledge ; is still a depth which our present faculties can never fathom.

II. Such is the **UNIVERSALITY** of the principle of love.

It is equally true that there is no other principle so influential. There may be other principles, other motives of action ; but no other motive has a like effect upon the mind, or leads so surely to the desired end. There may be, for instance, **COMMAND**, absolute command. And so, no doubt, there is command. But command does not influence or affect the heart ; and though that resistance to it must be subdued which is part of our

natural corruption, there are always pretexts to evade what there is no disposition to fulfil.

Try another motive, which is also calculated to sway man's conduct. Try the influence of REASON. The object which we propose, may be strictly in accordance with reason, may agree with the best and highest principles which ought to govern man. But this, too, may be resisted. It may be still argued that reason is fallible; all men do not see with the same eye: opinions are biassed by circumstances, and perverted by affections.

Or even if you set before the mind the prospect of REWARD; this, too, may be ineffective, for this may be foregone: the things to be resigned may be too dear to be given up, the things to be performed too painful to be undertaken; and the "light affliction which is but for a moment," when that moment is present, may suffice to overbalance the exceeding weight of future glory. The things that are temporal are seen, are felt, are known.

My brethren, you have experienced all this. You know, I fear, how little command can avail on the one side, when passion urges on the other. You know, equally, how vain it is to talk of the dignity of human nature, of what is suitable and honourable to it; that such arguments, however true and indisputable, have no efficacy to resist a

bad desire, or inspire a good one. We approve the law of God in the inner man; but a law in our members warreth against the law of God, and what we approve not, that we do. You know, too, how vain it is to set the glories of heaven before a man whose heart has not been raised to heaven; and that the least particle of this world's pleasure, or gain, or praise, is sufficient to outweigh an eternity of future blessedness!

Yes, too true it is, that none of these things move us—acknowledged in theory, but neglected in practice—not denied, but not acted on—none of these things move us—till the heart is animated with the love of God, who hath so loved us; till the love of Christ constraineth us “to live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us.” Then things painful will be willingly undergone, things dear to us be cheerfully resigned: then labours will be borne, and enterprises achieved, not grudgingly or of necessity, but spontaneously and gladly; labours which would be endured, and enterprises which would be undertaken, on no other motive or principle.

Brethren, it is no unknown or mysterious principle, this principle of love. It is the principle which animates the parent while watching over her

tender infant, or ministering to the wants of her dying child : it is the principle which animates the child, while repaying a parent's care, alleviating the pains of disease, or supporting the decrepitude of age. Who could anticipate the varied services which every successive hour requires ? Who, again, could command the patient endurance, the daily privation ? Or what reward could purchase anxiety long protracted, and watchfulness which forgets repose ?

It is the spring within that actuates : the principle of love is a law unto itself beyond all other law ; which does without command what authority would never require, and without recompense what no recompense could repay. And it is the same principle, and no other, which animates the Christian ; which leads him in everything to inquire, “ Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do ? ” which leads him in every place to feel, that he must be about his Master's business : that same principle which caused St. Paul, as the apostle of Christ, to persevere with cheerful patience, “ in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings

often, in cold and nakedness." He loved much, and because he loved much, he laboured more abundantly than they all.

1. When a principle is set before us, as capable of achieving certain operations, we always appeal to experiment. We prove our theory by practice. And it may serve the purpose of illustration, if we try the justness of these remarks by applying them to a particular case.

It is recorded by St. Luke, in his Gospel, that a "woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the house of one of the Pharisees, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now let us suppose that it had been previously intended to effect this object; deliberately desired and purposed to cause this woman to employ herself in this office, and thus to expend her treasure.

She might have been COMMANDED so to do. But she might have found reasons for evading the command. She might have urged that the com-

mand, though issued by authority, was not designed for such as herself. She had been a sinner. It was not for her to venture into the house of a Pharisee, to interrupt an entertainment, to intrude unbidden. Or she might have reasoned that such commands were directed towards those richer than she was ; that the costly box of ointment was reserved for other purposes—for a marriage, or for a burial—that there it would be needful, but now it could be spared.

I argue thus, because we know that in a like way the plain commands of God are constantly disputed ; that the wilful and perverse heart can always find a plea on which to escape them. They are for other times ; or for other countries. At any rate, they are for circumstances different from our own : for age, and not for youth ; for the rich, and not for the poor ; for the poor, and not for the rich ; for the Jew, and not for the Christian ; for the ministers of the Gospel, and not for the people at large. On one ground or other it is too easy to discover some reason, silencing if not satisfying conscience, why the law of God in our case should be set aside.

2. Another method might be tried. The action might be shown to be most REASONABLE. The

excellence of our Lord's character might be set before her, and she exhorted to show this token of respect. He has healed our sick ; he has restored eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame ; he has made the widow's heart to sing with joy, recalling her son from the grave : we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth ; we have been astonished at his doctrine, and at the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth. Who will not show him reverence ; who will not gladly bring forth their most precious treasure, and pour it on his head ?

So men have thought, that it was enough to display the excellence of virtue, and the beauty of holiness, and that all would fall down and worship it.

And, truly, all are ready to pay an abstract admiration, and to give virtue, and piety, and charity, the homage of their praise. But when this excellence comes with a demand upon themselves, a sacrifice of inclination or of fortune, its demands are too commonly resisted, and the approval of reason is experienced to be a very weak principle of action. For look at the Pharisee himself, at whose house this scene took place ! He, too, had known the character of the Lord Jesus ; he had witnessed the miracle ; he had seen the blessings bestowed ; he had heard the discourses ; he had

beheld in human form the image of the Father. But all this had been without effect upon him ; when he saw it, there was no beauty that he should desire it, that he should honour it, that he should requite it with what means he had. The Lord was forced to say to him, “ I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet—thou gavest me no kiss—my head with oil thou didst not anoint.”

Plainly, therefore, we must seek farther, must look beyond the fitness and propriety of what ought to be done, in order that that may be done which is fit and proper, justly to be expected, and rightly demanded of a man.

3. It may be thought, perhaps, that the strongest motive is yet unnoticed ; and that what might not have been yielded to command, or offered to abstract excellence, might yet have been secured by the hope and prospect of REWARD. I must not undervalue this. It is suited to the human heart ; and as such, our blessed Lord proposed it to the heart ; the apostles were actuated by it, and have held it forth to every Christian. But how feeble is this motive too often found ! How much is needful, besides the offer of eternal life, before sins are renounced, the pursuits of sense

abandoned, self-indulgence resigned, self-denial exercised ! Still more, before the heart is zealously affected in the cause of God, before all things are done to his glory, before every thought and word and work is brought into captivity to Christ, before we are disposed to count all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus ? In our own land, for example, the number is small of those who do not acknowledge that they look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. We know, and we believe, that an inestimable reward is reserved for those, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality. Yet who that looks out into the world, even the nominally christian world, can satisfy himself that this reward is the object on which the affections are mainly set ? Who can survey the affairs by which time is engrossed, minds are occupied, passions roused, or energy excited, and say of the community, These are laying up treasure in heaven ? these are acting on the conviction that the one thing needful is, “ to attain that world, and the resurrection from the dead ? ”

Vainly, therefore, might it have been said to this woman, as it is vainly said, alas ! to multitudes, Do this, live thus, and great is your reward in heaven.

But there was a principle which could effect what COMMAND might have failed, what REASON might have failed, what RECOMPENSE might have failed, to secure. That principle was grateful love. As the seven years during which he served Laban seemed but a few days to Jacob, for the love which he bore to Rachel ; so the reproach which she incurred, the humble duty which she discharged, the expensive present which she conferred, seemed as nothing to this woman, for the grateful love which she bore to her God and Saviour. Her motive is revealed to us ; the Lord who read it in her heart, has left it for our instruction. “ She had been much forgiven, for she loved much ; ” and her love delighted itself in this act of zealous and unsparing gratitude.

No wonder, then, that he who knew man’s nature, has left it written, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. It is not all that he has left for our instruction in righteousness : he has declared the will of God, and affirmed that only they who do that will, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; he has taught us what is suited to man, endued as he is with a reasonable and immortal soul ; and has directed us to “ whatsoever things are honourable, and true, and just, and lovely, and of good report.” He has not omitted the recompense of reward ; and

has spoken of the good things prepared at God's right hand for them that love him. But he still shows us a "a more excellent way;" even that law of love which extends beyond the letter of command, and which is already overpaid by the gratification of serving and obeying; which is never wearied, because it has in itself a perpetual refreshment; which always acts, because it exists within; which suffereth long, which vaunteth not itself, seeketh not its own; but dareth all things, hopeth all things, endeavoureth all things, endureth all things.

It now remains, brethren, that I apply what has been said to our case to-day.

He, whose we are, and whom we serve,—he to whom we owe even ourselves,—he has said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. And this is his commandment, "that we love one another;" this is his commandment, "that we do unto others as we would they should do unto us." It is his command that want should be assisted, that sickness should be visited, that calamity should be relieved.

The hospital,* whose funds you are invited to replenish, enables you to fulfil this commandment

¹ This sermon was preached at St. Martin's church in behalf of the Charing Cross Hospital.

to an extent and with a success not otherwise attainable. Many thousand persons every year partake of its mercies. Can we doubt whether this is agreeable to the Saviour's will? He has given us alike example and command, to show that if we love him, we shall smooth the pillow of disease, and allay the agonies of pain. For he himself, though his first and chief message was to the sick, yet went about doing good, restoring health to the body, strength to the limbs, power to the senses ; effecting that by the exercise of omnipotence, which this Institution attempts through your bounty to perform. Were he present now, as he was present in the house of Simon, I am sure that you, like the woman who had been much forgiven, would be eager to show him your highest reverence, to give him every testimony of your love. This ye cannot do ; for Him ye have not with you ; but the poor ye have always with you ; and they are his own words,—“ Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me.”

SERMON VI.

CHARITY THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANS.

John xiii. 35.

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,
if ye have love one to another.*

IT cannot surprise us that our blessed Lord should make this the rule by which his disciples should be governed,—that they *have love one to another*. There is something in charity and benevolence so suitable to man's condition in the world, that it is approved at once by our reason. The very description of it is captivating. “Let love be without dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice

with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”¹

These words have the effect of a delightful picture upon the mind. They represent a scene which it is pleasing to look upon, and which it would be far more pleasing to belong to. And therefore we cannot be surprised that He, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, should leave it in charge to his disciples, that they cherish this love in their hearts, and exhibit it in their lives.

There is something, however, arising out of these words, which may well surprise us. How is it, that in reading this description of philanthropy, it strikes us as the description of a world which is not ours? of some scene which is as foreign to our experience, as it is captivating to our imagination? Why was it left as the characteristic of the disciples of Christ Jesus, that *they have love one towards another*? Is not the belonging to one common nature;—is not the being creatures of the same God;—is not the being exposed to the same wants, the being oppressed with the same infirmities, the being inhabitants of the same trying and uncertain world, a sufficient bond of union among mankind? Must they need to be commanded so

¹ Rom. xii. 9—15.

to act, as we might expect them to act spontaneously? Did it require the teaching of the Son of God to bring men to *have love one towards another*?

If we consult the testimony of facts and experience, we shall find it too true that it did, and that it does, require such teaching to instruct man in this lesson. Too truly is it the case, that the heirs of this common frailty, the inhabitants of this common world, are by nature far indeed removed from loving one another.

If we turn, for example, to those countries which are nearest to what is called a state of nature—but which, as we know, is not the state in which man was created, but that to which he has been reduced by sin;—if we turn to these, we find that life there, instead of a life of love, is a state of enmity and warfare. We find that men, instead of being objects of the affectionate interest of their fellows, are objects of their hostility, their malice, their revenge, their cruelty. The Scripture faithfully describes them, when it says that they are without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

But we leave these degraded beings, fallen so low beneath the state for which God designed them. We should rather seek our specimens of human nature from countries which have been

more happily circumstanced; which have made progress in the arts which adorn humanity, and in the knowledge which ennobles it; and have realised all that could be done for them by prosperity, and cultivation, and philosophy.

And here, undoubtedly, we discover much that is interesting and admirable; we see that verily “there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding :”² we admire the exercise of his reason, the vivacity of his imagination, the extent of his intellectual powers; we acknowledge the traces of the image of God. But still we perceive that these powers of reason and of intellect never brought those who possessed them to the exercise of practical benevolence. The public history of the civilised nations of antiquity is a history of rapine, and of oppression, and of hostility; and the private history is little better. They form a striking contrast to the state of a christian land. They raised no infirmaries to relieve their sick. They built no hospitals to receive the aged and the orphan. They established no asylums to reclaim the wicked, and no schools to educate the young. After all that experience had taught, or philosophy had discussed, it still remained for the Son of God to “redeem to himself a holy nation,

² Job xxxii. 8.

a peculiar people," whose distinction should be, that they *had love one towards another*.

Yes, my brethren, and even still this distinction remains, and those who have it are still "a peculiar people." Even in this christian country it remains the distinction of those who are personally influenced by christian truth. I have no desire to undervalue even the indirect effects of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. I have been this moment allowing them; and if we refused to allow them, we must be ignorant of the annals of the world. Even the infidel historian acknowledges the change which he vainly and feebly endeavours to explain. We do confess, with gratitude as well as with admiration, that the diffusive influence of Christianity has cast a general face of benevolence over our land. But still I am warranted in stating, in a general manner, that where the Gospel does not personally govern the character,—where, though Christianity gives the name, the world supplies the motives and directs the conduct, it is not true of men, though they profess and call themselves Christians, that they *have love one towards another*. They do not see in one another those whom they are to honour, to assist, to benefit; but those whom in some way or other they are to make subservient to their interests or their pleasures. As an ob-

server of mankind, I cannot help remarking this : as a christian teacher, I am bound to declare it. Yet I would not pronounce it dogmatically. I urge it no further than may agree with your own knowledge and experience. Consult, however, your own knowledge. Reflect on what falls within your experience ; and so judge to what extent CHARITY prevails. Think of those who are constantly on the watch to devour, nay to destroy ; those who entrap the unwary for their fortunes ; of those who seduce the young to their ruin ; of those who, in all cases of mutual intercourse, consider only how their neighbours may be made useful to their private interests ;—think, in short, of the daily transactions of life, as they are commonly carried on in the world, and then judge whether He who sees the heart, sees that it is glowing with social affection, or actuated by christian love. No ; rather is it true, that “ all men seek their own,” disregarding the welfare of others. They value others in proportion as they may be benefited by them, may have their own comfort and convenience promoted by them ; further than this, they are callous and indifferent ; thinking little of their present good, thinking still less of their eternal welfare ; nay, too often, as far as in them lies, precluding it : so ordering their families

so inconsiderate of those dependent on them, that the cultivation of the heart, the growth of divine grace, and even the public worship of God, become practically impossible.

Therefore I am justified in saying, that however reasonable it might seem, and however probably it might be expected, that they who inhabit in common this our world, should universally be actuated with mutual love; it is not really true that they are so. Such love must be engrafted upon them. Naturally, men love themselves, not others; look to their own, not others' good; nay, scruple not to injure others,—to injure them in their present, to ruin them in their everlasting interests, when their own profit, their own ease, their own pleasure, is concerned. And this is not love: these are not the signs or the effects of love.

But our Lord has said of those who are indeed his people, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another.* If so, there must be some principle in the religion of Christ Jesus, which governs, in this respect, the conduct of those who believe in him; which places it in contrast with those who believe not. And a little consideration will prove that it is so; will prove that there are causes in continual action, which will make it always the distinguishing

character of Christians—as they were distinguished by the heathen in the early ages—*that they love one another.*

First, the very fact which is the basis of christian faith, places mankind in a new and different light. They are those whom “God so loved, that he gave his only Son, that all that believe in him might not perish.” They are those whom Christ so loved, that he left the bosom of his Father, and the glory which he had enjoyed from the beginning with the Father, “to seek and to save that which was lost,” to “give his life a ransom for many.” Therefore when the Scripture enjoins us to “honour all men,” it contains a reason why they should be honoured. For He has honoured them, who is the source and fountain of all honour. He has valued them, who knows what is really precious; and he has taught us to value them, by a practical argument which can never be confuted. Can I make that being the object of my private interests and selfish gratifications, who has been the object of my heavenly Father’s everlasting love? Can I injure,—nay, can I neglect or disregard, that soul which is so precious in his sight that for it Christ’s blood was shed? Can I treat one as the victim of my ambition, my covetous-

ness, my caprice, who is “a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?” Surely not, if I have any real sense of the meaning of these words. So St. Paul argued, for so he felt, “from the time that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared” to him. Before, he had acted even as others. “We ourselves also,” he says, “were sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”³ Such did the habit of his own mind appear to him, when he looked back upon it from the station to which he had been raised by the Gospel. For from the time when he believed in Christ Jesus, all things were seen under a new aspect : and his language is, “We ought not to please ourselves, but every one of us to please his neighbour for his good to edification : for even Christ pleased not himself.”⁴ “Destroy not the work of God.” “Destroy not him, for whom Christ died.”⁵ “When ye sin against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ.” “Through (thee) shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”⁶ Thus naturally did he draw the inference for him-

³ Tit. iii. 3.⁴ Rom. xv. 2.⁵ Rom. xiv. 15—20.⁶ 2 Cor. viii. 11, 12.

self, which his brother apostle has left for our instruction: "Brethren, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." ⁷

Secondly, he who believes in Christ Jesus, takes his precepts for his rule, and his example for his model. And his example is the practice of that brotherly love, of which his precepts are the code. He sums up all the law and the prophets in this, that we love our neighbour as ourselves; that whatsoever we would that they should do unto us, we do also unto them.⁸ He says to his disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."⁹ And truly he has shown us by his own conduct, what the will of God is in this matter; that men should manifest their principles and employ their means in relieving those evils, which, partly perhaps for this very reason, he has permitted to disturb our world. He might have exercised his power by works of ostentation or of judgment. But he did employ it in works of mercy and benevolence. The proofs of his Messiahship were works of mercy. The blind received their sight; the lame walked; the lepers

⁷ John iv. 11.

⁸ Matt. vii. 12.

⁹ John xv. 12—14.

were cleansed; the deaf heard. Was there a widow more destitute than another? That widow's son he raised. Were there sisters, to whom a brother was unusually dear? That brother he recalled from the tomb. And in so doing, he has taught us, and he has shown us, the will of God; which is, that men should feel for one another—should remedy the evil which admits of remedy, and alleviate what they cannot cure. As he “went about doing good,” so must his disciples. They must not pass by on the other side, when a fellow-creature is overwhelmed with temporal distress, or is perishing for lack of spiritual knowledge. And if this requires, as we know it does require, pains, and patience, and self-denial, this mind, too, was in Christ Jesus; for he was patient, and he was self-denying, when, that he might make propitiation for our sins, he “endured the cross, despising the shame.”

A third reason why the disciples of Christ are known by their active charity, is this: that, if they are his disciples, they have learnt of him a just sense of earthly things, and of heavenly things; a moderation in present gratifications, and a desire of a crown of glory. And this removes a great impediment out of the way of charity. For

all charity costs something. And the truest charity, that which is employed upon the soul, costs not money only, but time and pains. So that a person who is devoted to this present world, has no more the means of being charitable, than he has the inclination. His fortune is forestalled to meet the luxury, the ostentation, the extravagance, which characterises our age. His time is so occupied in business, or dissipated in amusement, that he has no leisure to spare for his fellow-creatures.

But it is not so with him who believes in Christ Jesus. For he has said, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" When words like these are not merely heard with the ear, but received into the heart, they have a practical effect. They regulate the habits. They take the affections from earthly things, and raise them to things above. The course of life is so ordered, that our fellow-creatures are considered in it. Expenses are so regulated, that a man "has to give to him that needeth." Time is redeemed from engagements which are unprofitable and vain, and may be spared for needful duties. The whole life takes its tint from that eternity for which it is a preparation; it is employed in "seeking for glory, and

honour, and immortality, by patient continuance in well-doing." The main object is, not to heap up treasure on earth, but to "lay a good foundation for the time to come;" to "make to ourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness;" such friends as, when this world fails, may "receive us into everlasting habitations."

These, then, are the reasons why our Lord has left this as an unalterable test by which his disciples may be known, that they *have love one towards another*. There is a provision in his Gospel to produce this effect; a provision which cannot fail to produce it, whenever the Spirit of God has conveyed the truths of the Gospel to the heart. These truths have not reached the heart, unless the heart is affected by brotherly kindness; unless it is set on things above; unless it is guided by the precepts which Christ has left for our instruction. So that we are taught to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith; and to make our works the standard of that examination: we are taught that as surely as a tree is known by its fruit, the disciples of Christ will be distinguished by this mark, that they *have love one towards another*.

I need hardly point out, in conclusion, the bearing of this argument upon the object which is before us this morning.¹ That object is the support of the schools in your parish and neighbourhood ; schools in which the rising generation, the children of your poorer brethren, are tended with christian care, and educated in christian truth.

Now the disciple of Christ Jesus will promote this object, because there is no way in which some part of that fund, which he devotes to charity, may be more usefully employed.

The disciple of Christ will promote this object, because in so doing he follows the example and the command of his Divine Master.

And still further, the disciple of Christ Jesus will contribute to promote christian education, because he desires the highest welfare of these children. The worldly man will argue, why should I educate my neighbour's child ? And perhaps he will find a reason : that he may prove a more useful member of the community. But the disciple of Christ sees in these children those for whom Christ has purchased by his blood an everlasting kingdom. He sees those who have been early dedicated to him ; who are called to

¹ This sermon was preached on behalf of the Charity Schools of St. Giles, Bloomsbury.

his service here, that they may hereafter inherit his glory. But still he sees the danger to which they are exposed. He looks forward to the world which they must enter, to the temptations by which they will be surrounded. These children, for whom we desire your aid, are now in a safe and happy state ; so comparatively safe and happy, that it is most affecting to reflect upon the change which must soon be made in their condition. For these, as they advance in life, must leave the school in which they are protected, and the care by which they are guarded, and be thrown among strangers, who, too probably, may feel little interest except in their labour. They will not be watched, as in other conditions of life, by a parent's anxious eye ; they are not even defended by those external decencies of conduct which, in the higher ranks, protect the morals, and though they must not be mistaken for christian obedience, still happily restrain flagrant wickedness. No, it is too likely that these children, at the age which most requires control, will be removed from any whose opinion they might respect ; when passion is strongest, will be mingled among those by whom passion is habitually indulged ; and will be exposed to all those evils which it is in the power of evil practice to engraft upon corrupt nature.

This, brethren, you foresee, but you cannot prevent; for you cannot alter the course of the world, or change the constitution of mankind. But if you foresee this with a Christian's eye, you will secure what is in your power; you will "train up the child in the way in which he should go," and in which you desire him to go, that he may be able to resist the temptations which await him. You will offer him the shield of christian faith, by which he may repel "the fiery darts of the evil one." You will furnish him with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." You will bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, who is more powerful to save than Satan to destroy; and who will enable those to overcome the world who put their trust in him. They must go into the midst of enemies; for where is the bright spot in this our wilderness, in which the soul does not find enemies? But they need not go unarmed, unwarned, or unprepared. Christian education supplies them with preparation, and with armour, and with warning. It nurtures the child in the discipline of Christ; and it provides, as far as we can provide, that he shall not depart from it.

On these grounds, then, I ask your assistance for the schools which your bounty must contribute to

support. I ask it as a proof of your being disciples of Christ. I “desire fruit that may abound to your account.”² Not that by this or any other exercise of benevolence you are to purchase salvation; but that you may have in your favour a test that you have “received”³ Him, and are received by Him, who has purchased it for you. I have shown that if your faith in him is real, it will certainly prove itself by the spirit of charity. And where can charity be more usefully employed, than in taking children out of the way that leadeth to destruction, and placing them in the road that leadeth unto life, even unto life eternal?

² Phil. iv. 17.

³ John i. 12.

SERMON VII.

THE SUREST MODE OF BENEFITING THE POOR.

Acts iii. 6.

Then Peter said, silver and gold have I none : but such as I have, give I unto thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

THESE will be remembered as the words of Peter to one who had been lame from his birth ; and whom they laid daily at one of the principal gates of the temple at Jerusalem, that he might ask alms of those who were entering. The apostle perceived it to be a proper time for exercising the power entrusted to him. What you expect, he said, I cannot bestow on thee ; silver and gold are not mine to give ; *but such as I have, give I unto thee.* I endue thee with the power with which other men are endued, but which has been withheld

from thee. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.* “And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.”

This short history, brethren, appears to me capable of important application, if I use it to illustrate the service which one class of men have power to perform, the benefits they can bestow on others. That they should leave nothing undone which can be done beneficially, is acknowledged by all who profess the Gospel of Christ. The principle of Christ's religion is to “do good unto all men;” to “love our neighbour as ourselves;” to consider his wants, his interests, as our own. It becomes, therefore, our duty to inquire in what manner he may be best assisted by us; how we may best discharge our stewardship towards him: that He who has dispensed to every one their several talents, when he comes to take account, may receive again “his own with usury.”

I. I begin by inquiring what one class of mankind cannot do for those beneath them.

We will suppose one whom God has blessed with wealth; and who desires to act upon the apostle's precept—“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works; ready

to distribute, glad to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.”¹

What, then, with these worldly means to employ, and this heavenly disposition to actuate him, what benefit is he capable of imparting to his fellow-creatures ? what improvement can he effect in their condition ?

He cannot, by any employment of his wealth, by any freeness of distribution or willingness of communication, effect a permanent change in the state of those below him in the social scale. He cannot turn dependence into independence. He cannot reverse the original decree, that man shall eat bread in the sweat of his brow.

Suppose him, for a moment, to attempt this, and, with such design, to divide his fortune with the unendowed families around him. Thus he exempts from those wants which urge to labour, perhaps ten, perhaps twenty, perhaps fifty families. But what is really done by this ? What are they among so many ? The general state of the world, the real aspect of the community, remains the same.

No, it may be replied ; and with some show of reason. The argument requires that all who have wealth should use it in like manner ; that all who

² 1 Tim. vi. 17.

are rich in this world's good, should share it with those who have none; and thus we see, not twenty or fifty families, but a whole community at ease.

This may beguile us at the first glance, like the mists in the horizon which deceive the fainting traveller; but carry your eye onward, look one moment longer, and you must perceive that thus we take away the source from which all income is derived. If there is no labour, there is no harvest; if industry is stopped, the flow of wealth is stopped; and instead of seeing a state of things in which the wealth of one is subservient to the interests of many, though some have more of that wealth than others, you see a state in which all are destitute; not some rich and many poor, but all alike reduced to indigence.

It is enough to hint at this. I need not carry the subject further. The ordinance of God is, that "man is born to labour." And when we can take winter out of the year, and make all a perpetual spring, we may take labour out of the world, and place man once more in Paradise.

In this sense, then, the answer of the apostle to the cripple at the temple gate must be the answer of the most benevolent amongst us. *Silver and gold have I none*, by which to profit you, to afford

you any real or lasting benefit. Silver and gold cannot make a permanent or effectual change in the condition of which you complain. It may afford temporary relief; it may assist emergencies; it may provide mitigation of sickness; it may serve to smooth the pillow of the dying; it may raise the orphan's head; it may comfort the desolation of the widow. This it may and ought to do. He who left us an example that we should follow his steps, he showed us by his conduct that his great object, to redeem the world from eternal ruin, did not divert his pity from those temporal evils, which, though not to be compared with things of everlasting interest, still press heavily on weak and mortal man. One in whom the love of God resides, will not "see his brother have need, and shut up his bowels of compassion from him." One who lives in the faith of Christ, will remember how he said, "I was naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Here, however, we soon find the inefficacy of the silver and the gold. It relieves immediate destitution; but the same indigence recurs, if the cause remains from which it comes. We may

mitigate the severity of disease, but we cannot remove the root of pain and sickness. No effort of man can take away the consequences of the first sin:—death, and all the pain and misery that leads to death:—labour, and all the pressure of want which enforces labour. Necessities recurring succeed to necessities relieved, like the returning waves after an ebbing sea, or like the waters of a river of which the sources are never dry.

II. We see what man cannot do, and proceed to inquire what is within his power. He must have something in his power. The Bible would not be so full of exhortation to be “rich in good works,” to be “good stewards of the gifts of God,” to relieve a neighbour’s wants, if there were no channel into which wealth might be so directed as to swell the amount of human happiness, or lessen the sum of woe. The Bible would not be so full of rebukes towards those who are “rich to themselves, and not rich towards God;” who hide the talent entrusted to them,—if there were no way in which that talent might be traded with, or God glorified in the use of what he has given.

I have shown that the condition of those who are low in the social scale cannot be so altered, that the poor shall cease from out of the land;

that those who are dependent upon their labour for subsistence shall be placed in circumstances of ease. As soon might we turn the tides of the ocean, or divert the sun from its course.

Our object, then, must be to improve the condition which we cannot change. To do that for the poverty which must exist, which the Gospel has done for the death which must arrive—to take away its sting. And there are means which have this power.

When the Israelites were wandering through the wilderness, and suffering from drought, they came to the waters of Marah, and they were bitter :¹ thirsting as they were, the people would not drink them. Moses prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. The branches of the tree changed the nature of the waters. It is an example of the manner in which RELIGION changes the character of poverty, and the condition of labour. That which was bitter, is made sweet : that which caused a murmuring, is complained of no more.

By religion, my brethren, I understand the Gospel of Christ Jesus ; for that is the religion revealed to me, and I know no other. Religion can

¹ Exod. xv. 23, &c.

effect that permanent change which we desire : it can make an abiding improvement in the condition ; it can lighten the burthen of labour : it can lessen the weight of poverty ; it commonly prevents the miseries of indigence ; and does for those who are blessed by it, what the apostle did for the cripple when he raised him from a state of impotency to strength and vigour. Had Peter given that poor man what he asked, he would have gladdened him for the moment, and that moment passed, his wants would have returned. But by what he did, when he bid him *to rise up and walk*, he removed his wants, instead of relieving them ; he lifted him up to a state which before he could not have reached ; the man became a new creature. It was great ; but it is only an example of the daily and ordinary effect of christian faith, when received into the heart. “ It raises up the poor out of the dust, that it may set them with princes, even with the princes of the people.” St. Paul has described this exaltation, when he writes to the Hebrew Christians, and speaks of the company with which they were associated as disciples of the Lord Jesus. “ Ye are come,”² he says,—ye are united “ to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge

² Heb. xii. 22, 23.

of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." With all these ye have now an interest, a connexion. Ye are raised above the family to which by birth ye belong, the fallen family of Adam, and have obtained a place among the family of heaven.

So that "the brother of low degree" may justly "rejoice in that he is exalted." His earthly rank remains the same, though even in this respect his godliness may profit him: but his spiritual rank connects him with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven. He is made the son of the most high God, "through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus:" he shares the gracious promise, "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty;" and he has an interest in the inheritance prepared for him of God before the foundation of the world.

And these privileges are not a mere name or title. They have a reality of present blessing. The sense of divine favour enlivens poverty, lessens toil, and cheers privation. Every day has its comfort, when the duties which are performed, are done to the glory of God. Every sorrow has its alleviations, when it is known to come from the hand of unchanging love, and the counsels of

unerring wisdom. The lot, however mean, was shared by Him, "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." The way, however rugged, is less rugged than the way he trode: and it leads to a glorious kingdom, where "there shall be no more curse;" where the "new heaven" shall be without cloud or storm, and the "new earth" shall not bring forth thorns or thistles; where the dead, whether rich or poor, who "have died in the Lord," shall "rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them."

Here, then, we find the good we want, and the good which we must be first and chiefly anxious to promote. The good we want, is the melioration of man's state. Religion produces that melioration. And the means that diffuse religion may be furnished by the silver and the gold. For though we can no more command religion, than we can command the wind that bloweth where it listeth, still there are certain agencies by which, in the course of God's ordinance, the grace of God is communicated to man, and he becomes that new creature which I have described; agencies which those who desire to glorify God may provide; nay, which God designs they should provide, and so become instruments in fulfilling his merciful purposes.

The first of these agencies is the HOUSE OF GOD, in which the Gospel may be perpetually proclaimed. For we may still ask as of old, and unhappily there is too much reason to ask, "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, unless they be sent?"

Manifestly this must be the concern of those who possess the silver and gold. *This they have to give.* God commits the duty to them. The poor have not the means of providing religious knowledge for themselves. There was a people once on earth, over which God himself vouchsafed to preside as king; leaving thereby to future ages an example of what he approves. For the religion of that people he made abundant and special provision. He devised ways in which all should be brought up in the knowledge of their God, all be able to enter into his courts, to kneel before him in his temple, to hear his word read in their synagogues every Sabbath day.

And those who believe that they have here an intimation of God's will, and make a like provision, are more truly benefiting their neighbours than they could profit them by any other distribution of their wealth. *Such as you have, you give to them,* when you prepare the place of worship, which may

invite them to come in, weary and heavy laden as they are, and cast their burthen upon Him who offers rest unto their souls. *Such as you have, you give*, when you provide that a minister should seek after the sheep which have strayed ; should warn and rebuke with the authority of one commissioned from God ; should point out the way through which the most unworthy may find access to God, and the most ignorant may be made wise unto salvation.

Together with the means of PUBLIC WORSHIP, they who possess the silver and the gold may furnish the means of EDUCATION. This also must be so brought within their reach as to be made easy to the poor. Even if they are apprized of its value, this is a case in which they require the aid of others. Securing this, again you may be entitled to say, *such as I have, give I unto thee*. You cannot send the children of your poorer neighbours into the world with any other endowment than that which their own exertions must procure. But if you send them into the world acquainted with the word of life, furnished with a knowledge of God as reconciled to man in Christ Jesus, and offering them access to Him by the Spirit as their Father ; ye have made them rich indeed. We do not under-

value other learning. Secular knowledge is desirable; for all knowledge may be sanctified when there is knowledge of God. But such knowledge can profit but for time. We need provision for eternity. A being who must live for ever, needs that knowledge which may bless him for ever. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to possess that knowledge which is revealed to the youngest of our children, and have not attained it; nay, even Solomon in all his wisdom was not instructed like one of them. The kingdom of God had but dawned on Solomon. On them it shines in all its brightness and its fulness. In its light they may walk safely. By its rays they may be cheered through paths that would otherwise be dark and gloomy. Nay, its glory may be reflected on themselves; and they, too, may shine as lights in their own proper world, their holy practice seen and admired by all who know them.

A time, brethren, is spoken of in the prophets when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God." "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man

his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.”³ You read this in the prophet, and in your minds you refer it to some imaginary period, when what is described of heaven shall be realised on earth, and “ God shall dwell in the midst of his people.” Thus we turn aside what we ought to be strenuously promoting. Not so the inspired interpreter.⁴ Paul, writing to his countrymen, shows that the prophet had described the blessings of the New Covenant; that the promise belongs to the present dispensation, refers to that knowledge of God which the Gospel should spread throughout the world.

Do we look on a very different state of things? Do not all know God, from the least to the greatest? Let us beware, that we are no way accountable for this; that the difference between what is, and what God’s word says, shall be, is not owing to ourselves; is not occasioned by a course of conduct inconsistent with our christian profession.

We cannot plead that *silver and gold we have none*. We cannot plead that there is nothing in which silver and gold can avail us. Silver and gold can build CHURCHES, where the people may

³ Jer xxxi 33, 34.

⁴ Heb. viii. 10, 11.

assemble themselves together. Silver and gold can erect SCHOOLS where the young and the ignorant may find instruction. Silver and gold can sustain MINISTERS, who may preach the Gospel to the poor ; who may warn the unruly, reclaim the wandering, comfort the weak-hearted, disturb the reign of Satan, and frustrate his devices. Indeed, indeed, brethren, there is much that all can do, if they were once led to act upon the principle, *Such as I have, give I unto thee*. If all who have influence would use it in the cause of God ; if all who have authority would countenance the pious and the good, and discourage whatever tends to promote licentiousness ; if all who carry on the business of the world would make the service of mammon give way, whenever it interferes with God's service ; if all who enjoy leisure would occupy it in visiting, and assisting, and cheering, and exhorting those who need relief, or comfort, or exhortation ; if all who have themselves drunk of the waters of life would lead others to the same wells of salvation, then—they would really do no more than the Gospel they profess demands—but then we should see the picture of the prophet realised, as far as it can be accomplished in this present world ; then we should see the tide as it were turned, on which the great majority of man-

kind are carried ; then the general current, instead of setting against religion, so that everywhere and on all sides it finds an adverse stream to overcome, would flow in favour of religion.

And can this ever be ? “ O Lord God, thou knowest.”⁵ What hinders, but ourselves ? This, at least, we may pray :—“ Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon ” this people now assembled in the name of the Lord ; that they may ever remember “ whose they are, and whose are all their ways ;”⁶ may glorify thee on earth with the gifts which thou hast bestowed ; may devote themselves, with all they are, and all they have, to the service of Him “ who loved them, and gave himself for them !”⁷

⁵ See Ezek. xxxvii. 3—9.

⁶ Dan. v. 23.

⁷ Gal. ii. 20.

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY OF PROMOTING CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION.

Matt. xix. 13.

*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come
unto me.*

THESE words were mercifully spoken, and are mercifully left for our instruction. Little children were brought to the Lord Jesus by their friends or parents, “that he should put his hands upon them, and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.” He was engaged in solemn discourse, and they did not approve the interruption. But Jesus said, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me*, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. As much as to say,—I am come into the world to give the very thing which these parents desire: to give a blessing. Do not deprive these children of

it. Partakers of Adam's sinful nature, let them also be "partakers of the divine nature." Inheritors of that ruin, under which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," let them also share in that restoration which comes through "the second Adam." Let them be "renewed in knowledge, after the image" which they have lost. Born to labour and sorrow, let them also inherit that which can alleviate sorrow, and cheer the weariness of labour. *Suffer little children to come unto me.* They who enter into the heavenly kingdom must be such as these are now, in the time of their innocence; and nothing can preserve them, or make them such, except my blessing.

This, we may believe, must have been the mind of the compassionate Saviour, when he rebuked his disciples in these words. And thus he has left to all ages a practical proof of his will; his perpetual will. He has still the same pity for our fallen race; still the same desire to save those who are encompassed by outward temptation, and betrayed by inward frailty. He still invites them to come to him, and desires that they should be brought to him, that they may find rest in his word, and protection in his love.

And whilst we consider this subject, with a view to fulfil his merciful desire, may He who has pro-

mised to be with his people, “ whenever two or three are gathered together in his name,” may he realise his gracious assurance, and be with us and bless us !

Let us then pursue the subject opened to us in the text, and inquire, first, What it is for the young to come to Christ : next, The need for coming to Him : thirdly, The end of coming to Him.

I. *Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me.*

But, Lord, thou art in heaven, and we thy weak and sinful creatures are on earth ! It is long since the angels sang, “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the king of glory shall come in !”

True, the parents of the present day cannot bring their children to the Lord in the lowly form of man, which for our sake he vouchsafed to bear ; they cannot now behold the condescending goodness with which he took them in his arms, or laid his hands upon them.

But there is a way of applying to Christ, more sure than the movement of the body. Many of the Jews *had come* to him by the movement of their bodies, and were standing round him at the

very time when he said, "*Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*"¹ And again, on the other hand, the Ethiopian *had* come to him, whom Philip baptized: had come to him when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;"² though in the flesh he had never seen him.

It is the heart, brethren, and not the body, which comes to Christ. The coming to him is the surrender of the soul to him for all that it needs: for pardon, justification, redemption, instruction; in a word, for salvation.

"I will arise, and go to my father," thought the prodigal in his extremity.

Now it was the mind here which really sought this refuge. Before the body moved, the mind had gone.

And thus it must be with the child; thus we desire it may be through the influence of early teaching and continued instruction. In our christian land, the parent does what the Jewish parents did when they brought their little children to the Lord. He offers up his child to him in the way and ordinance which he has himself appointed; he prays that the child may be received into his flock, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. He does this with a definite object; with a clearness of view and

¹ John vi. 40.

² Acts viii. 37.

knowledge which the Jewish parents could not have. He feels that he has imparted a corrupt nature to his children; and that unless they be “born again, born of water and of the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” But there is a remedy, and he brings them to the author of that remedy, and prays that their sinfulness may be atoned for, their corruption purified, their children made “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”

This is the beginning, but only the beginning. Painful experience teaches us how much is still required, that the child may remain a partaker of these covenanted blessings; and, when the eyes of the understanding are opened, may *come to Christ* in inward feeling, as well as by outward ceremony. And, therefore, we desire that the young creatures growing up around us should be continually reminded of the covenant made for them, and of the obligations to which it binds them. We desire that as they advance in age, and are involved in the business and temptations of the world, they should understand the circumstances in which they are placed; the dangers which encompass them, the defence which may secure them. We desire that as they enter into life, it should be said to them, “Behold,

you go forth as lambs among wolves.” Such is the nature of the world to which you belong. You have enemies on every side, seeking to devour ; but there is a good Shepherd, “who laid down his life for his flock.” He is glad “to gather the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead the feeble and the young ;” if only they will “hear his voice, and follow him.” He who is ready to save, is greater than he who would destroy : and none shall pluck out of his hand those who commit themselves to his care.

Thus we desire that from their earliest infancy these children should be acquainted with the Redeemer ; familiarised to think of him as the Giver of heavenly things ; habituated to come to him in their minds for that which is needful to their souls, that they may be delivered from this present evil world, and attain eternal life.

For, whether we speak of youth or age, this is to *come to Christ* : habitually to look to him for “all things that pertain to life and godliness :” to look to him for the ransom which he has paid ; to look to him for the justification which he procures ; to look to him for the wisdom which he supplies ; to look to him for the grace which he bestows ; to look to him for the rules which he prescribes : naturally to look to him, as the scholar looks to his

master for instruction ; as the soldier looks to his general for commands ; as the child looks to his parent for support, and assistance, and encouragement, and protection, and for all that life requires.

II. Why so ? will any ask ? Why is it thus needful ? What reason have the young for coming to a Saviour ?

The strongest reason ; the most urgent need. They perish without him ; they have the sentence of death, eternal death in themselves, which he alone can set aside.

My brethren, were you to see a child labouring under some severe disorder ; daily becoming weaker, and less and less able to prevail against the inward disease ; you would not ask, What need of a physician ?

Now, sin is the worst disorder ; and sin is bound up in the heart of every child.³ Christ is the physician, who has the only remedy against sin. And therefore the child has need of Him at the earliest age. The sooner we oppose natural corruption, the better hope we have of curing it. And the longer we suffer the evil heart to rule, the more unwilling to yield will it become.

Again, brethren, if you saw a child entering

upon a thick and tangled wilderness, through which it was to find its way, you would not ask why that child should need a guide. Now the world is such a wilderness; it has many wrong ways, easy to find and follow; many tempting ways, holding out to the young much pleasant fruit, which grows along the path-side: and, besides, many companions are wandering along those unsafe paths, and will persuade, if they can, others to follow them. There is but one right way leading unto life, and that “a narrow way:” do we ask, why the child should need a guide? why the guardian of the narrow way should say, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me?*

But, brethren, I trust that it is needless for me to give reasons why it is good to come to Christ. I trust that you are ready to say, like the people of Samaria to their countrywoman:—“Now we believe, not for thy saying, for we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”⁴ The sheep know the value of their shepherd, who has long directed them by his voice, and fed them by his hand, and preserved them by his power. The soldiers understand the worth of their commander, who has never deserted

⁴ John iv. 42.

them in the hour of danger, never left them unsupported on their post, never led them but to victory. The mariners are sensible of their pilot's skill, who has steered them in safety through rocks on the one side and quicksands on the other, and is bringing their vessel, frail and shaken as it is, towards the haven where they would be. And so I trust that you know why others should be led to Christ, because you have been led by him yourselves ; because you know the excellence of his pastures, and the security of his fold : because you, through him, are " more than conquerors " against all the enemies of your salvation.

III. And thus I have arrived at the last of those inquiries which I proposed ; and have only to consider, thirdly, What is gained by those who come to Christ, obeying his invitation ?

My brethren, there are many paths through life, but there can be only two terminations. There are the paths followed by them " that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." The end of those paths is " indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, reserved for every soul of man that doeth evil." Then there is the path followed by them, who, " by

patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality." The termination of this path is life eternal: this path leads to the kingdom of God, prepared for the righteous from the beginning of the world, "where is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

And this is gained by those who come to Christ. They are withdrawn from the paths to which nature would carry them, and example would direct them, the end of which is death; and they are conducted into the path which leads to everlasting salvation. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Look, brethren, for a moment, at these different terminations: consider the two sentences.

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."⁵

Suppose that you were hearing these different sentences pronounced; that you were seeing the vast assembly on the left hand, "shut out from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power:"

⁵ Matt. xxv. 41—44.

whilst, on the other hand, a bright kingdom was displayed, such as “eye hath not seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

What would be given at such a moment, if any of those on “the left hand,” now about to inherit the consequences of their unrepented sins, could be rescued from misery, and received among “the children of light !”

It is, then, impossible. The final sentence hath gone forth. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”⁶

Here, then, is seen the gain of those who have lived in the world as disciples of Christ Jesus. That is gained, which at the last will alone be valuable ; that which is beyond price, and which then no price can attain ; no, which not even the price of Christ’s own blood can purchase then, if not sought at “the accepted time,” not secured in the “day of salvation.”

Now, then, is the season when we must provide for that, which, too late, we might desire in vain. Now, in the beginning of their days, must children

⁶ Rev. xxii. 11.

be *suffered to come unto Him*, that he may secure them in his fold, and nurture them in safe pastures, and lead them in the way everlasting.

And the way *to suffer this*, is to provide for it. There is no surer course by which those who possess the gifts of God, and desire to use them as faithful stewards, can benefit those who are less favoured. This blessing they who are themselves instructed can give to others who are ignorant. This, they who have been taught of God the value of the soul, can do for those who have no sense of its importance. And too often if we do not actually provide for this, we virtually *forbid it*. The children cannot procure instruction for themselves ; nor always their parents for them, even if they knew its value.

And think of the blessed result, if God favour the effort, and the young are bred up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Such is human nature, that to be without knowledge is to be without religion ; not to be the servant of Christ, is to be the slave of sin. And to serve sin, is to serve that cruel tyrant, the destroyer both of body and of soul. How grievous is the return he makes, the wages which he pays ! There is pain, anguish of body, ruined constitutions ; there is, still worse,

anguish of mind, the stings of conscience and of sorrow, ending, perhaps, in a broken heart; there is disgrace, indigence; there are prisons, banishment, death. It would be less, if this were all; if death, the last consequence of sin which we actually see, were indeed the last consequence of sin. But, beyond the death of the body, "outer darkness" awaits the soul, "weeping and gnashing of teeth;" "the worm that dieth not, the fire that never shall be quenched."

When, then, we ask you to provide the means of education, religious education, to those who would otherwise be wanting it, we ask the means of deliverance from all these. We ask that the children of corruption and the subjects of temptation may be brought to Him, who has engaged that sin shall not "have dominion over them," neither shall "the world overcome them."⁷ He will show them what is safer than sin, and better than the world. Bring them to Him, and he will show them their real state, and raise them out of it; disclose to them the evil which is in their hearts, and cleanse them from it. Bring them to Him, who will teach them that industry is more cheerful than idleness, and contentment better than murmuring; that sobriety

⁷ See Rom. vi. 14. 1 John v. 4, 5.

is happier than excess, and chastity than impurity. Bring them to Him, who shows that godliness has real charms, that profaneness is hateful and abominable; that there is comfort in meekness and kindness, but none in malice and revenge. Bring them to Him, who shows that there is more blessing in "the peace of God," than in anything this world can give; who can bestow on them what they can never find elsewhere, rest of soul.

SERMON IX.

THE GOSPEL A BLESSING TO THE POOR.¹

Matt. xi. 5.

The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.

WHEN the Son of God, now become the Son of man, was asked whether he was the Saviour who should come—the long-promised, long-predicted, long-expected Saviour of the world—this was part of his answer, part of the proof which he offered,—*The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*

It was not the only proof. He bade them attend to the miracles which he wrought. “The blind receive their sight; the deaf hear; the lepers are cleansed.”² All these things were spoken of by the prophets, as signs of the times of Israel’s redemption. All these things are done. Therefore be

¹ Preached at the consecration of a church.

² Isa. xxix.; ib. xxxv. 5, 6.

sure that he who was to come is come—look for no other; God has fulfilled his promises; the Son of God is become the Son of man.

But these miracles belonged to the dwellers in that age and country. The blessings which Christ should bring, would belong to every age and every country. These miracles were a blessing which began and ended with this present world. The blessings which Christ should bring, were not for time, but for eternity.

And therefore our Lord, looking forward through all time, and providing for eternity, concludes his reply by adding, *And the poor have the Gospel preached unto them*. The poor are no longer neglected, and passed by, as if unworthy of eternal life. The Son of God is come into the world “to give his life a ransom” for as many as receive him, without respect of persons. And as he dies for all, so the tidings of his mercy shall be proclaimed to all. Provision shall be made that “all things pertaining to life and godliness” shall be henceforth supplied to those, who could not from their circumstances procure them for themselves. The proclamation of my Gospel is, “Ho ye, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and ye that have no money, come, buy and eat,

buy wine and milk without money and without price.”³

These words naturally lead me to examine, first, the nature of the blessing: *The poor have the Gospel preached to them.*

Secondly, the manner in which this promise is accomplished: how it is ordained that the poor shall *have the Gospel preached to them.*

I. Consider, first, the nature of the blessing.

For surely I may assume that it is a blessing. When God speaks thus of the Revelation which he has sent, we may conclude that in the divine mind it is a benefit of which he speaks; nay, the highest benefit, the greatest blessing.

And yet there may be those to whom this shall not appear. It may be doubted; nay, I fear it is by some both doubted and denied.

Some may be found who would imagine that when the Son of God came from heaven, he would have brought a better gift, if he had made man's earthly condition more easy and plentiful: if, instead of ordaining that *the poor should have the Gospel preached unto them*, he had ordained that

³ Isaiah lv. 1.

the poor should cease throughout the land : if, for instance, He had said, the original sentence is removed ; man shall no longer “ eat bread in the sweat of his brow.” The earth shall no more “ bring forth thorns and thistles.”⁴ All shall be plenty, as when manna fell from heaven in the wilderness. It is want which leads to labour : there shall be no want ; and thus labour shall be dispensed with, and the world shall be again a Paradise.

This, however, is not effected by the Gospel. It is not intended that the Gospel should attempt this. God, who knows man better than he knows himself, well knew that if man’s nature remained the same, to remove poverty, and together with poverty to remove the necessity of labour, would bring no addition to his happiness. So far from it, if such a change were possible, it would not be desirable ; it would not confer benefit, but injury ; it would not promote happiness, but increase misery. To exempt mankind from labour would bring them no advantage, unless with the ease of Paradise we could restore them to the innocence of Paradise. To a corrupt nature idleness is the parent of sin.

We have too sure proof of this in the abuse of

⁴ Gen. iii. 17—19.

that day of rest which God has appointed for man. Occasional rest, temporary cessation from labour, does promote happiness. In his mercy God has provided for this ; has “ given his Sabbaths ” for this very end. Those who use them as God designs they should be used, know and enjoy the benefits they bring.

But alas ! how few are they ! How many cease to labour for mammon, only that they may labour for Satan !—rest from worldly toil, only to be active in sin !

This shows how little the nature of man is fitted for a state in which there should be no poverty, no want, no need of labour. For I need not say that sin is not happiness. No ; the real cause of nine parts in ten of the misery which abounds in the world, is sin ; is not the laborious lot to which the first transgression condemned mankind, but the corruption it entailed upon them, and the evil habits springing from that corruption. He well knew the real interests of mankind, what even their earthly condition chiefly needed, when in pity for a ruined race he designed to repair that ruin, and sent his Son “ to bless them, in turning away every one from his iniquities.”⁵ Not in changing the course of the world, but in changing

⁵ Acts iii. 26.

God has so willed it—that he may reach the end. He only shares the lot which God has appointed for his people generally. It is the universal rule: “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”⁹ It might have been that a different portion should have been assigned him. But what would it have profited him, compared with what he now has, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

But I may go further, and affirm, that he has great blessings in possession. “Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.” He has a blessing to which peace belongs, such as nothing else can give; he is “walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” The fear of God keeps him in the path, the only safe path, where he should go; and the comfort of the Holy Ghost cheers and refreshes him on his way. He has the assurance, that his “God shall supply all his need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”¹ “The Lord is his shepherd: he shall not want.”² And he does not want. His bread is sure. His religion secures him from those necessities which give real

⁹ Acts xiv. 22.

¹ Phil. iv. 19.

² Ps. xxiv. 1.

bitterness to poverty. There is indeed much indigence, miserable indigence, to be found. But we rarely find it in company with religion. Indigence is seldom experienced, except as the consequence of vice. Nothing is so expensive, so ruinous, as vice. And vice he has renounced, because he is a child of God. And thus he is doubly rewarded; for even worldly persons value him, because he is faithful and profitable to them; and in misfortune, if misfortune comes, he has a sure resource in those who are united with him in love towards a common Saviour.

After all, these are outward things; and happiness does not depend on outward things. They may be granted, and the heart may be still sad. They may be taken away, and the heart may have a spring of cheerfulness within, which the rich of this world may envy, but cannot attain. Were I to draw a picture of misery, I know not where to look for one more striking than that which is represented in Scripture; where we read of one who came to his house "weary and displeased, and laid himself down on his bed, and turned away his face: and would eat no bread."³ And whom does this describe? one who "rises up early, and late takes

³ 1 Kings xxi. 4.

the course of man's heart, and bringing it from sin to holiness, "from the power of Satan unto God."

This, brethren, is what the Gospel does. And because it does this, it is a blessing. Because it does this, the Lord represents it as a blessing, when he says, *To the poor is the Gospel preached*. That, and that alone, can make a permanent change in the condition of man. It does not set aside labour; but the severity of labour is softened, and it ceases to be repulsive, when it is made a religious duty. So in regard to poverty. The Gospel does not banish poverty from the world: "the poor ye have always with you:" but it relieves its weight, and sends a cheering ray into the darkest cottage. All burthens are lessened by being shared; and the poor man's lot was shared by Him, who is the author and giver of all wealth: "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."⁶

Think, brethren, of the difference produced in the state of one who has little of this world's good, when the Gospel is preached to him, not "in word only, but in power;"⁷ and he becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus. He is raised to new and real dignity. He may be one of those who have small

⁶ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

⁷ 1 Thess. i. 5.

honour among their fellow-creatures. It is more, to be honoured of God. And God has honoured him. Herein is honour, that God has sent his Son for his salvation. No child of Adam can be so mean, so abject, but that he may become a child of God, through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus. And whoever is a child of God, is raised to an eminence from which he cannot be cast down, is made heir of a kingdom which “fadeth not away.”⁸

Think, farther, of the comfort which he receives, and the encouragement which he enjoys, when a just view of this present world is set before him. It is not his all. It is not his portion. It is not the world in which he is to look for rest, but for labour, in order that he may rest hereafter. It is not the world in which his happiness is to be enjoyed, and exhausted, like a fire of thorns, which blazes for a moment, and then expires. But it is the world in which he is to be prepared for happiness of real and lasting brightness, “shining more and more in perfect day.” It is not the country in which he is to reside for ever, but which he is to travel through as “a stranger and a pilgrim.” Are there times of trouble? Is he made acquainted with adversity? These are but stages which he must pass—

⁸ Psalm cxiii. 7.

Here the invitation will be regularly given, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."⁸ Here the minister will continually labour, that the way of salvation may be made known to all who seek it; that the inquirer may be satisfied, the waverer confirmed, the wanderer reclaimed, the penitent comforted, the pious Christian "established, strengthened, settled."

And here let me remind my brethren in the ministry, how great a privilege is granted them, that they are what they are, heralds of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

If it were your chief business to administer things temporal instead of things spiritual, you might go from house to house, and find your bounty wasted, your labour vain. Even when apostles were temporal almoners, "there arose a murmuring."⁹ And even if human nature could be so changed that there should be no discontent, no envy: you would be trying an Egyptian task, when labouring to remove distress out of the world. Want would rise above want, and misfor-

⁸ Isaiah iv. 7.

⁹ Acts vi. 1.

tune appear beyond misfortune, like hill above hill to a traveller among mountains ; and, after you had done all, the end would be as far off as ever.

But going as you do, “ ambassadors for Christ,” and carrying in your hand the word of eternal life, you have a substantial and lasting comfort to bestow. In whatever way you find the mind oppressed, you bring with you a healing balm.

Is the heart sorrowing for its sins ? This may well be. We wonder it is so seldom and so slightly felt. The Gospel provides the means of consolation. You have to tell of those comfortable words of Christ to all who truly turn to him : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Is it the remaining corruption of the heart that grieves the conscience ? This too may well be. For we have no sure evidence of our acceptance with God, till sin is overcome in us. “ He that is born of God sinneth not.” But here also the Gospel has consolation. For of his flock the Saviour says, “ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Though the flesh lust against the Spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other,” let them not despair,

rest, and eats the bread of carefulness?" My brethren, it describes a king, so abundant in this world's treasures that he built a palace of ivory;⁴ so displeased and heavy that his food was distasteful to him, and his sleep went from him; because he had been disappointed in obtaining Naboth's vineyard.

Were I, on the other hand, to describe happiness, such happiness as is given to fallen men in this sinful world, it would meet me in St. Paul's account of his own state of mind as a Christian. "I know," he says, "how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."⁵

This, then, is the reason, why it was promised as a blessing, and foretold as a blessing, and at last proclaimed as a blessing, that *to the poor was the Gospel preached*. It makes a real, a permanent, a truly desirable change in their circumstances as well as in their hearts. It places them altogether in a different condition, even as regards this present world. In every respect it is true, that "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature."

⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 29.

⁵ Phil. iv. 11, 12.

Old things have passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”⁶

II. It remains now to consider the means by which this promise is continually fulfilled. It was no temporary purpose. As every individual man in every successive age must come for salvation to the cross, so the cross must be lifted up before every man in each successive age. And here, as in his other purposes, God condescends to use the agency of his people ; makes his will known to them, and expects them to perform his will ; that his will performed, may be his prophecy fulfilled. He has declared his design, that *the poor shall have the Gospel preached unto them*. And he expects that his disciples, those who call him Lord, will see that his purpose is accomplished.

Brethren, it is accomplished, and *the poor have the Gospel preached to them*, when provision is made for the public worship of God, and for the regular instruction of the people in spiritual things. The church now built, and dedicated to the perpetual proclamation of the Gospel, is an accomplishment of the prophecy. Here the truth will be constantly held forth — God “ willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”⁷

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁷ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

but plead the more earnestly for his aid who said to his apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee."¹ They, too, may some time say with the same apostle, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

And then, in pain and sickness, how delightful, through the dark and gloomy cloud that over-spreads, to look towards the prospect beyond, to point to the kingdom prepared for those "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality." "Brethren, the time is short," and the trials of this present season are not "worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

Such are the blessings which attend the Gospel ; and such is the honour granted to the ministers, by whose mouth the Gospel is preached to the poor. Let them so account themselves, and let men so account of them, as dispensers of the mercy of God, out of the fulness that is in Christ Jesus !

A parting word to you, my friends, for whom all this is done. See the faithfulness of God. He said, more than eighteen hundred years ago, *The poor have the Gospel preached to them.* And now

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

he performs his promise. He puts it into the hearts of some of his servants to build this church in which we are assembled, that you may not have to seek the Gospel at a distance, but it may come close to your own homes. And he has provided that a minister should reside in the midst of you, to warn, and teach, and rebuke, and admonish, and comfort, and lead you in the way everlasting.

When God takes this care for you, he expects that it will not be thrown away. "Of them to whom much is given, much will be required." "Lay hold on that eternal life," which is now brought nigh to you. Reflect on the law of God, and on your own hearts and lives, till you perceive your helpless state, if God were to call you into judgment. Reflect on this again and again, till you feel the burthen which you bear :—distressed, though not despairing ; dismayed at the difference between yourselves, your own character, and the holiness of God's law. Then look towards the Saviour Christ Jesus, as holding out his hand to raise you, and place you safely. And observe the road he points out ; the way in which you should walk, and which if you keep, you shall do well unto the end, and find him ready to present you, redeemed by his blood, and purified by his Spirit, before the Father's throne.

May there be many in this place, who shall so attend to the word spoken, that they may be thus convinced, and comforted, and converted; and prove to the minister who preaches the Gospel to them, “a crown of rejoicing” at the great day!

SERMON X.

THE DUTY OF PROVIDING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Ezek. xxxiv. 6.

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

SUCH was the state of things in Judea when Ezekiel was commissioned to declare the word of the Lord. Provision had been made for that country, rich and plentiful provision, that wide as the land was, so widely should the knowledge of God be spread; that though the people should multiply as the sand of the sea, the worship of God should prevail amongst them all, and his commandments be had in honour. Far otherwise was the event; the flock was neglected, *scattered upon all the face*

of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Hundreds of years afterwards, when He came in whom all the law and the prophets were to be fulfilled, the same complaint was made. Jesus, we read, “went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”¹ Their shepherds had deserted them. There were young, but no one to guide them, no one to “gather them in his bosom;” there were aged and infirm, but none to “gently lead” them and comfort them; there were sick and diseased, but none to heal them; there were those that had been driven away, and others that had strayed from the fold, but none to seek those that were lost, none to “feed them in green pastures,” or “lead them forth beside the still waters;” nay, rather, “they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered;”² so that our blessed Lord, “when he saw the multitudes, was moved with compassion on them.”

¹ Matt. ix. 35, 36.

² Ezek. xxxiv. 4, 5.

And how would it be, my brethren, if the same merciful Lord were to pass through the cities and villages of this land? Would he find no reason for compassion? How would it be if another Ezekiel should hear the word of the Lord saying unto him, "Son of man, prophesy"? Would he find no cause to say, "They are scattered, because there is no shepherd"?

We are but too well able to answer this question. The city in which we are now assembled might alone furnish the prophet with too large a theme. The Diocese with which I am intimately acquainted might add to it an appalling burthen; and the Society, to which I draw your attention to-day, might accumulate details from every corner of our land, and complete the strain of lamentation, "They are scattered, because there is no shepherd."³

In this respect the parallel is too exact between Judea and our own country. The parallel goes no farther. The condition is similar; but it cannot, in truth or justice, be traced back to the same cause.

The people of God in Judea were scattered,

³ This sermon was preached at St. Bride's, Fleet Street, in behalf of the Pastoral Aid Society.

because “the shepherds fed themselves, and not the flock;”⁴—went after their own pursuits, consulted their private interests, and cared nothing for those whom it was their office to guide and lead.

Our people are scattered, because they are too many for the shepherds. The flocks have multiplied, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred, but the enclosures remain the same; the shepherds are not more numerous: and our case is such as the case might have been in Judea, if, while the eleven tribes, the secular part of the community, increased, as they did increase from the day when they entered into the land of Canaan, the Levites, the religious instructors of that community, had continued stationary, their number the same in the time of Ezekiel as it had been when they passed the river Jordan.

Had this been the case in Judea, we may justly conclude that Ezekiel would not have been commissioned to “prophecy woe unto the shepherds,”⁵ or to lay the burthen of blame upon the spiritual guides and teachers of the land. They would not have been condemned for leaving that undone, to effect which was utterly beyond their power.

⁴ Verse 2.

⁵ Ib.

It may, seem, however, that the language of Ezekiel is not addressed to the spiritual rulers only, but applies no less to the civil governors ; for they, too, were “ the shepherds of Israel,” and were charged with the spiritual, no less than with the temporal interests of the people committed to them. Though, therefore, the remonstrance of the prophet would spare the priests and Levites, outnumbered as they were by the flocks which demanded their care, and fainting under the labour which it must cost to “ bind up that which is broken, and to bring again that which is driven away :” yet still the word of the Lord would come unto him, and he would prophesy against the civil rulers, “ because the flock became a prey,” and none was sent “ to search after them.”

What shall we say, then, in applying to our own case, and our own country, the word of God as delivered by the prophet of old ? Shall we continue idle, looking upon the scattered flock, but not assisting it ; and leave to “ the powers that be” the duty of providing for the spiritual wants of the people over whom they rule ?

Brethren, this becomes a matter of grave consideration. There is danger lest we should impute to others a blame in which we share ourselves : there is danger lest, while we impose on others a

duty which we conceive is theirs, the duty itself remain unperformed, till the flock that is scattered become scattered more and more, and those that might have been restored to the fold be lost for ever.

Unquestionably, an obligation lies upon those who govern a country to supply their people with spiritual instruction.

We will proceed a step further, and consider the grounds of that obligation.

They are these. Allowing, as we may allow, that the Gospel contains no special direction upon this point addressed to the governors of a country,—yet it is the duty of every man to promote the glory of God, and therefore it is the duty of the RULER; and of his more than other men, in proportion as he has more power.

Again, it is the duty of every christian man to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer; and of the RULER more than other men, in proportion as his means are larger.

Still farther, it is the duty of all to consult the welfare of their fellow-men. The higher the interests concerned, the more urgent is the duty. Spiritual interests, the welfare of the never-dying soul, the things that pertain to eternity—these are, of all interests, the highest; and therefore it is the

duty of the ruling powers to promote these interests by all the means they have. Whatever else they do, this, as far in them lies, they must not leave undone.

But here observe, why and on what grounds this duty is incumbent on them. Not by any specific law binding those who rule, and none others, like the laws which bound the Levites and the priests of Israel to peculiar services; services to perform which was obedience, and to neglect, transgression. The obligation lies upon christian governors, as men, as Christians, as those who have an account to render, as those to whom talents are entrusted—talents of influence and authority—which they are bound to use to the glory of God and the benefit of their fellow-men.

And observe, further, that for the very same reasons the duty is incumbent ON OURSELVES. We may, or may not, be equally responsible: we may, or may not, have equal power, equal means committed to our charge; but all have some means, and some power, and all are bound to use the opportunities they have to the welfare of their neighbours, and the honour of their God and Saviour. It is only the duty of the governor, on the same principle as it is the duty of every private man.

His obligation may be more urgent, because the neglect of it may be more injurious: but the principle is the same. Whether he performs his duty or not, our duty still remains binding on ourselves. It is the duty of every individual man, and still more of every christian man, that no soul should “be destroyed for lack of knowledge,” which he may have the power of communicating.

Our Lord has inculcated this in the parable of the wounded traveller. They whom it most nearly concerned to relieve his condition—the priest, the Levite, the fellow-countrymen—passed by on the other side. This did not exempt the Samaritan from obligation. And the approbation which he received, is the praise to which it behoves us to aspire.

In the same manner a parent is bound to provide for the child to which he has given birth; bound to supply its temporal wants; and no less bound to bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But it may be that the parent neglects that duty, and I find the child naked, destitute, and ignorant. The parent’s obligation does not absolve me of obligation. As man and as Christian I am bound, as far as may be, to fill up the lack of service of the parent.

Still further observe, that all duty is limited by

opportunity. “ A man is judged according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.” Now, our governors are not omnipotent ; they cannot act, except as the law permits ; and, with the best possible intentions of giving a benefit to the community, they could only confer it with the concurrence of that community.

Brethren, of that community we form a part. There is a responsibility on ourselves ;—a responsibility, to which, as A NATION, we have been too long insensible ; and to which, AS INDIVIDUALS, we are now beginning to turn our serious attention.

But, thanks be to God, we are beginning. The evil is seen, and the duty is partly acknowledged, and the first steps are already taken, that the prophet may not always have reason to complain, *My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*

Brethren, the Society *searches and seeks after them*, which I introduce to your notice, and for which I ask your assistance. It looked out upon the wide surface of our land, and saw, in many a district, the shepherds, not idling in the shade while “ the beasts of the field” devoured the flock, not “ feeding themselves” when the sheep were

without pasture, but saw them sinking under a charge, which neither bodily strength could bear, nor intellectual power sustain. What were they among so many? "The thing was too heavy for them," as for Moses in old time. They were not able to perform it themselves alone.⁶

I need not go far for instances. They are too generally found on every side. Too many examples might occur within sound of the very bells which summoned us to church this day. Take but a single specimen, and let the Society itself supply it. The aggregate population of the parishes or districts which it assists, amounts to about one million and eighty-six thousand persons, in whose spiritual care, before the aid of the Society, one hundred and forty-seven ministers were employed, each having in charge, on an average, about eight thousand five hundred souls.⁷

Now in whatever light we contemplate this state of things, it is appalling. Shall we contemplate it as a people to whom God has given "an advantage, great every way?" And yet, to this land so blessed, so privileged, the very words of the apostle may be applied, when he was looking towards a

⁶ See Exod. xviii. 18.

⁷ Such was the case in 1838. The numbers are now nearly doubled, but the proportion remains the same.

whole world of idolaters,—“How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”

Shall we contemplate it as those who have been the causes of this increase, whose capital and commercial industry has created the animal being, but whose care and concern has not extended to the spiritual being?

Shall we look at it as members of an Establishment, whose characteristic is, that every individual in the land belongs to his own fold, and has a claim upon his own shepherd?

In all these various lights, the PASTORAL AID SOCIETY contemplated the state of things; and, with a single eye towards God's glory, and a firm belief that the welfare of our church was connected with His glory, its founders applied themselves to lessen the overwhelming evil. And, breathing the spirit of prayer, acting with the confidence of faith, and giving themselves to the work with an energy which could only have been thus supported, they have, in the course of two short years, supplied the salaries of one hundred and twenty-three curates, and twenty-two lay-assistants; thus doubling the spiritual superintendence of one hundred and thirty-two ecclesiastical districts, and of more than a million of the inhabitants of our land.

Brethren, I think it no disparagement to the Society that it does supply the salary of twenty lay-assistants.⁸ If no lay-assistant may receive a salary, no lay-assistant may be employed. The same principle which forbids his salary must refuse his aid. In many circumstances the expediency may be questioned,—of that, let the incumbent judge,—but for the legality I must earnestly contend ; for if our clergy, in their spiritual labours, are to receive no aid or co-operation, except from clergy like themselves, they must sink under an intolerable burthen, or their people perish in hopeless ignorance. If none, except those who are solemnly set apart and devoted to the ministry, are to advise and instruct their neighbours in religion, what multitudes must ever remain uninstructed and unadvised ? And how is that time to arrive, which Scripture teaches us to expect, when “ all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest” ?

Still, let me not be mistaken, as if I would be the author of confusion. The minister has his distinct duty, the duty to which he is called, to which he is set apart, as the ordained dispenser of God’s

⁸ The society requires that the lay-assistant is simply to be employed as a district visitor, tract distributor, and scripture reader, and by no means as a public instructor or preacher.

word and sacraments, as minister of the congregation in which he is appointed to serve.

But religion is not confined to public ordinances : and there is much connected with both the knowledge and practice of religion, which needs no special commission in order that it may be communicated to others.

“ Great,” without controversy, “ is the mystery of godliness ;” so great, that “ angels desire to look into it.” There are depths in religion which no man can fathom ; and, doubtless, there are difficulties in Scripture which need the exercise of learning in all its branches, and to which, as its highest employment, we trust that learning will ever be applied. But though the scheme of salvation is a mystery, the tidings of salvation are no mystery. As the apostle argues,—“ The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart ;” that is, the word of faith which we preach ; “ that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”⁹ The mystery of salvation may be beneath thee, too deep for thy reach ; or may be above thee, too high for thy contemplation ; but the word of salvation is nigh thee, even at the door.

⁹ Rom. x. 8—10.

What is it, but man a sinner, and Christ a Saviour? No long course is needed of special education, in order that we show to a thoughtless, godless, unenlightened transgressor of the divine law, the means of escape "from the wrath to come." What need we but to know that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"? That God is "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish," and has "given repentance" and remission of sin to "as many as receive him, and believe in his name"?

Indeed, it often happens that the more of mystery we mix up with the plain truths of the Gospel, the more we darken the counsel of God; and that the more simple our statements are, the more they will affect the hearts of those who hear, and the nearer they will approach the words of inspiration.

But there is still another light in which this subject should be viewed. If only those who are specially set apart for such purpose may advise or instruct in spiritual things, how are ordinary Christians to discharge the duties of their religion? We desire to imbue them with its spirit; we desire that they glorify God in all their ways; that they love their fellow-creatures as Christ himself loved

them ; that they keep themselves unspotted from the world, and live to the honour and service of their Redeemer. This we inculcate, as the result and evidence of their faith. But is this state of heart to have no sphere in which it may be employed and manifested ? Is this feeling to be concentrated within, and never expand itself abroad ? Nothing can give energy but exercise ; no spirit can survive the want of it. Are men to keep themselves “ unspotted from the world ” by hiding themselves in the cloister or the desert ? Is their concern for their fellow-creatures to regard their perishing bodies alone ? Is all their love of God to evaporate in their closet ? Are they to “ live to Christ,” and not extend his kingdom ?

My brethren, if we were to shut out from spiritual usefulness all who are not ordained to spiritual things—if we do not rather excite and urge them to such duties—we shall contradict the plain commands of our religion. The apostles addressed all Christians, all sorts and conditions of men within the pale of the church, when they enjoined them “ to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day ;” to “ edify one another ;” to “ speak to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ;” to “ warn the unruly,” to “ comfort the feeble-minded ;” to “ assemble themselves together,

that they might provoke unto love and to good works ;” to “ visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

These duties, therefore, are required, as forming a part of the christian character, and tending to perfect it. They are no less necessary to the religious welfare of every country circumstanced and fully peopled like our own. We shall never be a christian community, till it is with us as it was with those who were first called Christians ; when every one who has the knowledge of Christ in his own heart, believes it his duty to bring to the same knowledge the individuals with whom he is connected : his child, his servant, his dependant, his labourer, his neighbour. Then, and not before, may the kingdoms of this world “ become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

Proceeding, then, on these principles, and actuated by this spirit, the Society has gone forth in the strength of the Lord, and has sought, and has received, his blessing.¹ Great, indeed, is the debt which we owe to those who have pointed out to the

¹ What is here said regarding the Pastoral Aid Society, is equally applicable (except as regards lay-assistants) to the Curates' Fund Society, which supplies the salaries of at least one hundred curates.

nation the extent of its real and most urgent wants ; who have awakened to exertion the church at large ; who have attracted public attention to the weakest points of our establishment, that its breaches might be repaired, that it might be strengthened where alone it was assailable. They have done much, also, by drawing out into exercise internal power and latent vigour ; by rousing local exertions ; by multiplying opportunities of instruction ; by rendering existing means more useful and effective. They are worthy of a return, not of our good-will and our good word only, but of those resources by which their efforts may be sustained and extended still more widely.

Still extended. For one effect of these inquiries into the state of our church, and of these endeavours to relieve it, has been the discovery of unimagined wants, and of destitution which must no longer be suffered to remain.

You, my brethren, who are hearing me this evening, you have not experienced the evil of which I speak ; you know nothing of spiritual destitution. You have at hand your appointed minister, more ready to converse with you, than you, perhaps, to listen to his words. You have your places in the sanctuary, where, Sabbath after Sabbath, you are reminded of saving truths, and your

affections are drawn from things below to things above. The Scriptures are in your hands and in your ears; a word, as it were, “behind you” to direct your ways, and relieve your doubts, and strengthen your weakness.² When sorrow or when sickness come, it is no strange countenance you see, no unaccustomed voice you hear. The minister who has been acquainted with your more prosperous days, is now your adviser in difficulty, and your comforter in misfortune. You abound in spiritual things, not less than he abounded in temporal enjoyments whom the well-known parable describes as “clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day.” At that rich man’s gate lay Lazarus, diseased and destitute, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the board of superfluous luxury.

And think you, that, in the crowded streets and lanes which surround us on every side, and which teem with human existence, there is not many a Lazarus, labouring under the malady which sin has caused, but ignorant of its remedy; capable of receiving the bread of life, and only the more deserving of compassion because there are means of grace which he is not permitted to attain? I know that those crowded streets and lanes abound in

² See Isaiah xxx. 21.

wickedness and ignorance; in ignorance which prefers darkness to light, and in wickedness which there is no purpose to abandon. But I also know, that where there are mortal bodies there is also an immortal principle; that where there are men, there are hearts; and where there is a heart there is a conscience; a conscience which is not always seared, a heart which may, peradventure, be opened to the voice of mercy, though hardened against the rebuke which its guilt has incurred; a heart which may respond to the blessed invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden:" a heart that may be softened by the gracious assurance, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

Nay, among those who have been long wandering in the wilderness, far beyond the shepherd's reach, and escaped from the safe fold, some, surely, there are who were brought up as lambs of the flock, and fed with "the milk of the word." Once, perhaps, a pious parent could think of them with hope, and a faithful minister with joy and thankfulness. Now, alas, a "corrupt heart has turned them aside," and they have gone into strange pastures; but are there none of these who might be sought, might be recovered, might be brought home "rejoicing?"

And shall no messenger be commissioned to warn and to reclaim? In this our land, where the "darkness is past and the true light now shineth," where God has poured out his most abundant blessings, must there still be room to ask, "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

My brethren, let us not incur the guilt in spiritual things, which the parable to which I have alluded, condemns in temporal. Let us not be content to enjoy our own abundance and feed upon our sumptuous fare, multiply our religious exercises and indulge our contemplative devotions, and forget, meanwhile, those who lie destitute and perishing, yea, even at our very gates, and for whom "nothing is prepared."³

³ Neh. viii. 10.

SERMON XI.

DAVID'S PURPOSE TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF
GOD.

1 Kings viii. 18.

And the Lord said unto David, (my father,) Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

IT is a small thing, as St. Paul most truly says, to be judged of man's judgment; swayed as man too often is by passion, by interest, by error. Here we have the judgment of God; that judgment which we must all abide at last. Blessed is the man who shall then have testimony like this: *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.* The purpose of thy heart was good and well pleasing to God.

This testimony is handed down to us, and, like

all Scripture, is intended "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."¹ We are bound, therefore, to give it our close attention, especially on an occasion like the present, when you are invited to assist towards an object similar to that which God in the text is represented as approving. And may the Spirit of God attend and enlighten us, whilst we examine the grounds of the commendation which God here pronounces on David: *Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.*

First, *It was well* that David in his prosperity remembered God as the author of all prosperity.

We are often able to form our best and truest judgment of human conduct when we see it in the way of contrast. Compare, therefore, David's conduct with that of some others recorded in Scripture. Compare it, for instance, with that of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, whom Daniel reproves in just but severe expostulation.² He, like David, had experienced the favour of God, had been raised to a royal throne. He, like David, had seen in his predecessor an evidence of what God approves and disapproves: Belshazzar's father, like Saul, because

¹ Tim. iii. 16.

² Dan. v. 17—23.

“his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride,” was deposed from his kingly honours, and “they took his glory from him.” “Yet thou his son, O Belshazzar, (so the prophet addresses him,) hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest these things. The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.”

Here, then, is one example of conduct opposite to that of David; conduct as severely condemned, as the other is graciously approved.

If we descend from lofty situations, and come nearer to ordinary life, another striking example meets us, in that rich man represented by our Lord,³ whose ground brought forth plentifully—so plentifully, that he knew not where to bestow his fruits. Surely he will remember the giver of so much good; surely he will turn his thoughts to Him who directs the seasons—holds the winds in the hollow of his hand—commands the rain to fall, the sun to shine!

No thought of God crosses his mind: ³ “What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for

³ Luke xii. 17—19.

many years : take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

Now here, brethren, whilst we have opportunity of calm reflection, we cannot see in this anything to approve ; though we see an example of what, in effect, is too common in the world. But our reason, our conscience tells us, that we should be surprised if God had declared of this rich man, *Thou didst well, in that it was in thine heart* thus to employ, and no otherwise to employ, the substance which God had given.

These examples place in a clearer light, by force of contrast, the conduct which was approved in David.⁴ “ It came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar : but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” I have all that is needful to me, and more also : God has no temple worthy of his name. “ Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”

⁴ 2 Sam. vii. 1 ; Psalm cxxxii. 3, 4.

The difference is very evident between this character, and the character described by our Lord in his parable. One of these men regards only himself, his own inclination, his own present gratification. The other thinks how he may please, and serve, and honour God. The one has, the other has not, the love of God in his heart. Love towards God is in nature like love towards man; where it exists, it will show itself; it will find occasion for acting. Whatever talents a man possesses, he will employ them with a view to God's glory, if the love of God prevails with him; or with a view to this present world, if the love of this world actuates him. And, no doubt, things are so ordered that the bent of the heart may appear; the various wants which exist, the many distresses, the superfluity of some and the deficiency of others, all the many differences of dispensation which we see around us, are designed for this great purpose: they are because God "will try us, that he may know what is in our hearts."⁵

And this is seen and proved. Suppose the case represented in the parable: it is a case which constantly occurs. The rich man's ground "brings forth plentifully." His affairs are prosperous: things succeed with him. The return which is made

⁵ 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

from the employment of labour, of capital, of skill, is large—larger than there was any right to reckon on. Now, if the heart is set upon this world, we know what will be done. The fortunate possessor will pull down his barns and build greater: he will not be satisfied with what contented him before. Perhaps there is an estate which may be added to his territory; and he will be like those in Judea of old, whom the prophet reproves,⁶ saying, “Woe unto them that join house to house and field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.” Or perhaps luxury and magnificence of living has most attraction. Then “the lust of the flesh” is gratified; “the lust of the eyes” is pleased and indulged; “the pride of life” is consulted; and the other representation of Isaiah is verified, and the other reproof incurred: where “the harp and the viol, the tabor and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but men regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.”⁷

Such will be the course of human nature, unless it is influenced and governed by the Spirit of God. Men will seek their own indulgence, their own gratification, in whatever way their inclination

⁶ Isaiah v. 8.

⁷ Ibid. ii.

leads them; and as it was with Belshazzar, "the God in whom they live and move and have their being, they will not glorify."

And *is it well* that such thoughts should be in the heart, and that such should be the practice to which such thoughts lead? *Is it well* as regards the soul? Does it tend to advance the eternal interests?

Suppose, for example, that instead of turning his mind to build the house of God, David had resolved to raise a splendid palace for himself as king of Israel. We are truly told by the apostle John, that the pomp and show, the grandeur and magnificence, which belong to the pride of life, are "not of the Father, but of the world."⁸ They do not direct the heart towards God who is above; too often they divert it from him. Their tendency is to favour that downward impulse of the heart, which sinks too naturally towards the world and the things that are in the world. It might have been so with David. It was so with another king of Judea, even a good king, and one who feared God. Hezekiah was led into error by the state and splendour of his royal palace.⁹ When the messengers of the king of Babylon came to

⁸ John ii 15—17.

⁹ 2 Kings xx. 12—17; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

visit him, “ he showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures :” he showed this to them with that self-satisfaction which a man often feels in such possessions, as if forgetting from whom they come, as if forgetting how soon they may leave him, or he be removed from them. God sent his prophet to bring him to a better mind ; assuring him that all these treasures of which he was so vainly proud, “ all that was in his house, and all that his fathers had laid up in store, should be carried into Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.” Thus it might have been with David ; and *it was well* that other thoughts were in his heart, and that his first resolve, when God had placed him on the throne of Israel, was to build a temple to his glory.

This proved David’s own piety. But others, besides himself, were concerned in what David did. He was a king, and had the interests of a people to promote. And *it was well* that such were his thoughts, because it proved that David knew the real foundation of happiness ; that happiness of his subjects, which it was his duty to consider.

The house of God, brethren, is the mean or instrument of religion. Without it, religion can hardly exist, certainly can only be in a languid state, unless there is a place where the word of God be regularly proclaimed, to teach the ignorant, to satisfy the inquirer, to warn the careless, to edify the devout and godly. And without religion, what is human life? We might compare it to a dream, except for the awful difference, that a dream leaves no consequence behind.

Of the richer inhabitants of a land, what is the life without religion? without that peace with God, and that walk with God, which belongs to faith in Christ Jesus? It is a life which has little of real satisfaction even for the present time. If the heart is turned towards that luxury and magnificence to which it is too naturally prone, these soon satiate. If another of this world's snares prevails, and pride has possession of the heart, this, too, is restless and unsatisfying; there is always the misery of seeing others foremost in the race of wealth or honour. If the current runs in another channel, if covetousness is the ruling passion, and wealth is hoarded, what real pleasure can it afford? A turn of credit may scatter an accumulated fortune to the winds; or a spendthrift heir dissipate in vicious folly the savings of useless

parsimony. Let a man, on the contrary, use his fortune as a talent committed to him by the providence of God, and every day that passes brings him satisfaction. He sees some happy and thriving, who, but for his bounty, might have sunk in hopeless indigence ; he sees their children, whom he has helped to educate, growing up “ in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;” he sees the happy results of industry which he has promoted, of principles which he has inculcated ; “ when the ear hears him, then it blesses him ; when the eye sees him, it bears witness unto him : the blessing of them that are ready to perish comes upon him ; and he causes the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” ¹

David, therefore, judged well, rightly understood the welfare of his subjects, when he resolved to build an house to God’s name, and so provided, as far as in him lay, that the rich among his people should walk in the fear of God, and live to his glory.

But the rich are few. Turn we rather to the poor, and think of the difference which is made in the lot of that larger multitude, which in every land must obtain their subsistence by the labour of

¹ Job xxix. 11—13.

their hands, when they live under the influence of religion.

The lot of the labourer is hard, if he looks to the present world alone; and it seems to himself harder than in fact it is. He sees many around him in a condition very different from his own, and he naturally thinks that they must be happier, because they have so much more of that which all mankind are striving for. He sees them possessed of comforts and of ease which he can never attain; and he knows not that these blessings are often unattended by enjoyment, and in themselves can never purchase happiness.

But from the moment that he looks upon himself as a disciple of Christ Jesus, and on the world as it is represented in the Gospel, the case is altogether changed with him. Then, life is but a journey, and he a pilgrim passing to another country. To those who are journeying, the accommodations by the way are not the great or sole object; the object is, safely to arrive at the journey's end. He is not poor, if he is rich in faith; he is not low or mean, if he is a child of God; he is not unendowed, if he has an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. He rises up early, and late takes rest; but his industry is rewarded, his labours

cheered, whilst he is “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” His home, whatever else it wants, has that which is greatest ; it has God’s presence : and with that he has the assurance, that the God who dwells with him “ shall supply all his need ;” and on him he may “ cast all his care.” If he has content for the present, and hope for the future, he has what riches cannot purchase, and without which riches are vain ; if he has peace with God, he has what this world can neither give nor take away.

Thus, brethren, we see why it was pronounced well, that it was in David’s heart to build the house of God.

It was well, because he thus gave proof that whilst God brought him to wealth and honour, he understood his wealth and honour to be talents for which he must give account. *It was well* that he did not incur the reproof due to one who is “ rich to himself, and is not rich towards God.” And, further, *it was well*, it showed a right state of mind, a concern for the real welfare of the community under his charge, that he desired to raise a temple where “ the rich and the poor might meet together,” and worship the Maker of them all.

And yet, brethren, we cannot adequately judge of this, whilst we remain in this present world. We shall never rightly understand how well David resolved, till we know the realities which here we believe ; till faith is swallowed up in sight and knowledge.

Could we go up to the throne of God, and behold the Judge set, and the books opened in which men's lives are recorded—could we have the actual view of that new heaven and earth which we are taught to look for,—then we should be true judges of these things. Then we should estimate the danger of temptation, and the evil of all that ministers to temptation, when we witnessed the misery which results from yielding to it : then we should see the end of pride, and of luxury, and of revelry, and of covetousness, and of ungodliness : then we should see that there is no real wealth, except that which is laid up in heaven ; and that David was truly wise, who provided treasure there. Then, too, we should know more clearly than we can know now, the blessings originating in the house of God : the blessing, when one who might otherwise have never been raised above the ground he treads on, is made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven : the blessing which ensues, when that is accomplished for

which our churches are designed ; when the infidel is reclaimed, the sinner converted, the wavering strengthened, the mourner comforted, the penitent cheered, the pious Christian established, in the course which he has chosen.

O who can compare with results like these any of those objects on which the gifts of God, the silver and the gold, are sometimes lavished ! It is not said of the luxurious, it is not said of the proud, it is not said of the rich, the noble, or the mighty of the world—but it is said of those that “ turn many to righteousness, that they shall shine like the stars for ever and ever.”²

And now, in conclusion, let me draw the proper inference from the text on which I have been discoursing.

We have in it the divine testimony to a character. God himself declared of David, *It is well that it was in thine heart to build an house to my name.*

Judge concerning yourselves by this analogy. All religion must be judged of by its fruits ; by the conduct to which it leads. It would have been vain for David to have uttered those sentiments which we find so piously expressed in his Psalms—

² Dan. xii. 3.

“ Lord, how I love thy testimonies !” “ How amiable are thy tabernacles !” “ One day in thy courts is better than a thousand !” All these would have been vain, if there had been no practical consequence ; if these testimonies had merely been speculated on ; or if he had only loved the house of God as “ a hearer and not a doer of the word !”

David was approved, because he set himself strenuously to promote God's glory ; because, having been placed upon the throne of Israel, his first thought was to honour the God that is above.

Would it have been the same with you ? Have you the same conviction that the will of God is the first point to be considered ? If any here, on their return home, were to find intelligence awaiting them of an unexpected increase of fortune, would the first thought be, Now I may do more for God's honour, and my neighbours' welfare ? Or rather would the reflection occur—Now I must enlarge my habitation ; extend my concerns ; my retinue must be increased ; a better provision laid up for my family when I am gone ?

I will not affirm that none of these things ought to be done, but I will dare affirm that the other ought not to be left undone. And if any here

present should feel that on their part they have thought more of pleasing themselves than of glorifying God in their expenditure, an opportunity is now offered them of showing a better and a wiser mind. I need hardly describe the Society which asks your contributions.³ It is known, as all real worth must be known, by its works. It endeavours to supply the want of accommodation in our churches, which the neglect of past times, and the unexampled multiplication of our people, have rendered so general and so lamentable. During the last twenty-four years it has assisted one thousand six hundred and sixteen parishes in enlarging their church-room, by which means four hundred and thirty-five thousand additional sittings have been obtained. The funds are now exhausted, by which it has been from time to time supplied.

This Society, therefore, enables every man, according to his several ability, to partake of the commendation bestowed on David. It enables him to do what otherwise he could not do; to show his zeal for God's glory. To raise the church, in which the whole congregation may assemble, must belong to such as, like David, have extensive wealth and means. But to add a sitting to a

³ This sermon was preached in 1839, in behalf of the Incorporated Society for building and enlarging Churches.

church, in which one individual at least may join the worship of his God and Saviour, is within the power of most who are here present.*

Claim, therefore, brethren, to yourselves the approval—*It was well that it was in thine heart* to promote the worship of God. Great, exceeding great, is the honour vouchsafed to those who so use his gifts, as to make him the return which he requires. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

* It appears by the accounts of the Society, that for every twelve shillings contributed to its funds, an additional sitting has been permanently provided in one of our parochial churches.

SERMON XII.

GOD THE DISPENSER OF WEALTH.

2 Chron. xxv. 9.

And Amaziah said to the man of God, What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.

THE history belonging to this passage of Scripture need not detain us long. Amaziah, king of Judah, was at war with the king of Edom. In order to strengthen his own army, and make victory, as he thought, more secure, he had hired out of Israel, as allies, an hundred thousand men, for a hundred talents of silver. But there came to him a man of God, a prophet, saying, “O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for the Lord is not

with Israel.” Better to be without their aid, since God does not favour them ; than with their aid, lest God should leave us. The battle is the Lord’s ; “ God hath power to help, and to cast down.”

Amaziah is struck by this advice, and desirous to follow it ; but in that case he would lose the hundred talents, which he had already paid in advance to the men of Israel. Therefore he said to the prophet, *What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel ? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.*

A ready as well as just reply, offered at the exact time when it was needed ; needed to confirm the wavering mind of Amaziah. And such is the true character of faith ; to recal the truth, to supply the sentiment, to suggest the command which ought to influence us, at the proper moment, when the determination is to be made ; when the action is to be undertaken ; when the temptation is at hand. At this critical season the prophet reminded the king of a truth which he acknowledged, and ought to act on. *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this ;* this which thou art afraid of losing. “ A word spoken in due season, how good is it ! ” The king was persuaded

by it, though a weak man, who did not “follow the Lord with a perfect heart:” he sent home the troops of Israel; went against his enemies the Edomites, and gained a decisive victory.

From these words, brethren, let me endeavour to stir up your minds to liberality in the cause of God. For I conceive that this thought of Amaziah is the thought which too commonly and too naturally occurs when a charitable object is proposed to us, especially if the demand is of an amount to deserve consideration. *What shall I do for the talents* which I am thus solicited to employ? How shall I make up the loss? And the answer is, The Lord will allow no one to be a loser by his service: and *is able to give thee much more than this*, which thou art afraid of devoting to his will or to his glory.

Let me then set before your minds a few obvious reflections, which will show the justness of the prophet’s words.

1. I know that we do not deny the truth, but do we properly consider it? that no man can possess anything which is not *the Lord’s giving*. Whatever his possessions are, they may be traced back to the providence of God.

Perhaps he enjoys them through the care and

industry of his fathers and his forefathers. These were honoured in their generation, or blessed in their exertions, and have left him the fruit of their talents and their labours.

This, surely, is *the Lord's giving*. A man does not determine his own birth, or fix himself as the heir of such and such a family; it is God who in this respect makes one to differ from another.

Another owes his fortune to the qualities of his mind. Through such advantage he has been useful to his fellow-creatures, and they have repaid him out of that they had.

But here, again, who made him to differ from others? If there is a spirit in man, it is "the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth him understanding."

Another has gained what he possesses by the labour of his hands. But it is not less *the Lord's giving*. Who gave him strength to labour? Who gave him industry to persevere in labour? Who gave an increase to his labour? It is not all labour that brings increase. What is said to this purpose by the prophet Haggai, is daily experienced in the ordinary course of things. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little: and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came

to little : and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it, saith the Lord.”¹

Whichever way we look, brethren, we come to the same truth. God alone is the dispenser of wealth : whatever men possess, whether much or little—whether inherited from those before them, or gained by the exercise of their own talent and labour, must be referred to God. *He is able to give* ; and he alone is able.

2. Consider, secondly, that God preserves as well as gives. He still retains a power even over that which he has bestowed. Men hold it on the constant tenure of his will and bounty. He has but to speak the word, and “ riches make to themselves wings and flee away.” Think how the case was with that rich man whom our Lord describes in his parable ;² whose riches had so largely increased, that he was at a loss what use to make of them. All seemed safe and happy with him : he had “ much goods laid up for many years ;” and he delighted in the thought, how he might “ take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But see the end. God said unto him, “ Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?”

¹ Hag. i. 6.

² Luke xii. 16—20.

They are thine no longer than he wills it, “in whom thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways.”

Reflect a moment, and you will see that this is no extraordinary case ; it is the case of every day. A man seems to have reached the pinnacle of his desires ; what he has been looking at and striving for, has now become his own ; and, at once, he is summoned away from all ; “the place which knew him, knows him no more :” and all his thoughts are buried in the grave. O brethren, God may be truly said to give what he permits us to retain ; for he is indeed able to take away. We speak of talents, or of industry, and of fortune gained by these. But what if, in the prophet’s language, the Lord should “blow upon them ?” In a moment all have vanished. A breath of air may fever the brain which should command influence or collect wealth, and all the power of the mind is gone for ever. All labour, whether of mind or body, must depend on health ; and health, it is God who preserves or who denies ; no man can secure it for himself, or regain it if it should please God to “blow upon it.” And this is not unusual ; nay, it happens so commonly, as scarcely to excite surprise : it is what every one of us, if we would observe, has seen and known. There are a thousand ways

in which it is daily verified—circumstances which God alone can prevent, and which cannot happen without his permission ; may either supply four-fold whatever has been expended in his service, or may dissipate all that can be saved by the closest parsimony.

How often is this spoken of in Scripture ! The prophets are full of sentences which describe it. “ I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest. I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city ; one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereon it rained not, was withered.”³ And who has not seen this exemplified ? How common is it to find the son lavishing what the parent had slowly and painfully accumulated ; or the wind and storm, or other changes which are as sudden and unavoidable, swallowing up treasures which had been collected by the labour of many, many years ? And what does this depend on ? The storm raging. Yet God could have lulled the storm, and saved the fortune from its wreck. “ The wind and storm fulfil his word.” The son lavishing ! God could have given the son another heart. “ The preparation of the heart is from the Lord.” He did not see fit. “ He causes

³ Amos iv. 7.

it to rain upon one city, and causes it not to rain upon another city; one piece is rained upon, and the piece whereon it rained not, is withered."

Or turn your eyes to another case, likewise of daily occurrence. An occasion of doing good is set before us; some destitution, which we may assist to relieve; some family, plunged in unforeseen distress, from which timely help might raise them; or some neighbourhood, where the people are perishing for lack of knowledge, without church, without minister; or some country which remains in heathen darkness, for want of those who might hold up the lamp of eternal life. We hear, perhaps, of such demands upon our substance. But we argue—Not yet; this call applies to others—our family is still unprovided for—our capital must needs be increased—our expenditure cannot be diminished—*What shall we do for the talents* which we are thus invited to bestow?

But suppose, before the year has reached its close, God visits that family with sickness, which we have been so anxious to provide for, or to support in luxury. How soon is that lost, which has been so unwisely saved! How gladly would we give it all, to recover what God alone could have preserved to us! And how quickly, as well as painfully, may a funeral absorb that sum, which

might have been employed in serving God, in doing the work which he would have done !

Nay, brethren, it will be so, if God has any favour to us. I speak not of judgment, but of mercy. God will bring his people to a sense of duty, and cast down the idols which have the first place in their affections, if they love and serve them instead of Him. And when the trial comes, then we practically acknowledge what before it might have been called fanatical to avow. For, let illness seize one dear to us, we know where application is to be made. Then we have recourse to God ; and gladly confess that in Him, and Him alone, our hope is rested. And must we feel his judgments, before we own his providence ? Is it only by chastisement that we can be brought to trust Him ? Brethren, this is not FAITH ; for faith is to act when the senses are not acted on, and to realise the things which are not felt or seen.

I have confined my argument, as the prophet did, to this present world ; and shall not proceed to remind you, as I might, and as indeed I ought, if time allowed, of heavenly promises ; of those things which “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath laid up for those that love him :” love him, not in word, but in deed ;

love him well enough to sacrifice something for his will or his cause; love him well enough to consult his glory.

But without extending your thoughts to a subject so infinite, I come to the inference from these sure premises; the result of that truth which none can deny, that *the Lord is able*—not by visible interposition, or what would be deemed miraculous, but in the ordinary course of his providence—to return *much more* to us than we can lay out for him: much more, whether in this world, or in that which is to come. We all acknowledge this in words; we act upon it, when we do as Amaziah did. He sent away the army which he had hired, and forfeited his hundred talents. *The Lord*, said the prophet, *is able to give thee much more than this*. The poor widow acted on it when she cast two mites into the treasury, “even all her living.” *The Lord*, she knew, *was able to give her much more than this*. The early Christians acted on it, when such as had possessions and goods sold them for the support of the community. *The Lord*, they knew, *was able to give them much more than this*.

Brethren, that alone is religion, which does act; i. e. which governs the heart and practice; which transfers the doctrines of the creed to the daily

concerns of life. And, therefore, christian duty in regard to this, is to regulate our habits according to the principle, that he, who has given whatever we possess, who preserves to us whatever we enjoy, has a demand upon us; that we are bound to consider his will in the use of what he has bestowed. He requires his people to do something for him, and to trust him for a return; that in this they may show whether their hearts are his, or no—whether they are serving God or mammon. The amount, the proportion of revenue which should be thus applied and dedicated to God's service, is a question which cannot be laid down exactly. It seems purposely left open, as a test of the state of heart. I am far from meaning to say, that all are bound to do as Zaccheus did, when he resolved to live from henceforth to God, and no longer to the world, and devoted "half his goods" to charitable uses.⁴ The portion which is so dedicated, must depend on varying circumstances. Sometimes even a large share would be too little. Sometimes even a tenth would be too much. The amount must be reckoned, not by the sum that is given, but by what remains after it is given. But this is evident: the Christian must so regulate his expenditure as to leave a share for God. St.

⁴ Luke xix. 8.

Paul speaks of it as a thing of course—"On the first day of the week let every man set by in store according as God has prospered him;"⁵ set by in store for the different wants of the community. Whilst we set by in store for the necessities of life, whilst we set by for the provision which a family requires, we must also set by for his use, on whom life itself depends. This it is, to "lay up treasure in heaven." This it is, to "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Now there are various ways in which we are called to trust God with our talents. There are many things for which money is required, and which God has left for his people to do, that he may prove their faith, show it in active exercise, and reward them hereafter by *giving much more* than he has received. He has ordered the course of the world with a view to this. It is the dispensation of his providence. He has engaged that his people shall not be left to perish: they may be poor, but they shall not be destitute; their "bread shall be given them; their water shall be sure," as sure as the food which is supplied to the fowls of the air. And he fulfils his promise

⁵ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

through the hands of those who have this world's good; and whom he charges to be "glad to distribute, ready to communicate," that they may be his almoners, dispensers of his bounty. He will take no other proof of their loving him, than that they love and assist his creatures.

Nay, there are other wants of far more importance, which he also expects his servants to supply. His word must be circulated—it must be "told out among the heathen that the Lord is King." His Gospel must be published; those messengers of truth must be sent forth, who are to proclaim his mercy to those who now "sit in darkness and the shadow of death." But I shall not lead you now into the wants of foreign countries. There are spiritual wants at home; and I ask your aid to-day for a Society⁷ which assists to supply them—a society which is formed to do that which every individual would wish done, but which individuals can seldom effect; to provide the means of public worship for those places, whose churches are unable to receive their increasing people. I need not explain to you, at length, how frequent is this want, or how grievous its extent. Actual and particular investigation has discovered that the

⁷ The Chester Diocesan Society for building churches in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Cheshire.

public worship of God is not adequately provided for in any parish, unless their church will contain sixty out of every hundred in the population.⁸ About forty, rather less than more, out of every hundred, are prevented from attending church by age, or illness, or necessity, or circumstances. Whatever proportion beyond this number are excluded by want of room, are either left without God in the world, or forced to seek in other pastures that spiritual food which their national church denies. And is it not grievous to reflect, that in many districts of this country vast multitudes are thus left; that out of the sixty in every hundred who ought to be seated in church, or out of the forty who might justly be expected to be so seated, only an average of ten or twelve can really find accommodation.

* Such has been the result of minute personal inquiry, made by Dr. Chalmers, and Mr. Collins of Glasgow. If this be thought a larger number than it is practically needful to provide for, at least *a third* of the inhabitants of every well-ordered parish will certainly be present at every season of public worship. Let this be the ground of the calculation; and still, in all towns of increasing population, a deficiency will appear of one half of what is required. Even the legislature has acknowledged this, and permits the building of an additional church wherever the actual accommodation does not reach one third of the population. See 1 & 2 Will. iv. c. 38.

Brethren, these things ought not to have been ; and being so, they must not be suffered to remain. Such a disorder must not exist without a remedy. The Diocesan Society was instituted for the very purpose of assisting to supply this deficiency in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Cheshire. God has bestowed a special blessing on the effort. Through the spirit which it has excited, the encouragement which it has afforded, and the means which it has been enabled to disburse, thirty-six new churches have been provided with seat-room for twenty-five thousand persons ; and a hundred thousand individuals, who heretofore had been destitute, to any practical purpose, of church and minister, have now their resident pastor ; their friend, their adviser for this world and the next ; the dispenser of all the blessings which our established religion conveys.

Say not then, *What shall we do for the talents* which the supply of these blessings must demand ? *God is able to give you much more than this*—I have shown it in the course of his providence ; in the natural order of things ; without the visible evidence of his hand. I have also adverted to that heavenly recompense reserved for those who, “ by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory,

and honour, and immortality.” But even now, on this side the grave, the recompense begins. In that declining hour to which we are all fast hastening, God forbid that I should advise you to look for comfort in yourselves, in your own doings or deservings. The only ground of comfort, then, must be an interest in him “ who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” But some proof you will then need, that your interest in him is not merely a barren creed, a lifeless profession. It is a barren creed if it does not regulate the life ; it is a lifeless profession if it leads to no exertion. But it is more than a lifeless profession or a barren creed, if, through your means, those have been brought to the light of truth, who would otherwise have lain in darkness ; if those have been reclaimed to righteousness, who would otherwise have continued in their sins ; if any have been led to faith in that Saviour in whom is eternal life, and whom the churches we desire to build proclaim : but whom, without the funds which we entreat you to supply, they never might have known.

SERMON XIII.¹

GOD GLORIFIED IN THE BUILDING OF CHURCHES.

Haggai i. 8.

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house ; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

THE best introduction to these words will be to remind you of the occasion when they were spoken.

The Jewish people were recovering from that desolation, in which the magnificent temple built by Solomon had been destroyed. The seventy years had now expired which had been foretold as the term of their captivity: they had been restored to Jerusalem; and the first thing com-

¹ Preached at the consecration of a church.

manded them, was to rebuild the temple of the Lord.²

They lingered in the work : they did not feel with David—" I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the temple of the Lord." But their thoughts were of the nature which is more usual among men. " The time is not come, the time is not come, when the Lord's house should be built."³

For this the Lord rebukes them in the language of the prophet, saying, " Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste ? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts ; Consider your ways. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little : and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why ? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit." Then, together with the rebuke, encouragement is also added. *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it ; and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.*

My brethren, the encouragement is needful. What are the walls which we raise, unless God

² Ezra i. 3.

³ See Haggai i. 3—11.

take pleasure in them? Just what a body is without a soul: hopeless, spiritless, unprofitable. "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it." The word may be sown, but it may fall by the way-side; or it may be choked by thorns, or the heat of temptation may scorch the springing blade. It is only when the Lord gives "the honest and good heart," that a ripe and precious harvest rewards the husbandman.

And therefore we rejoice in those declarations of his will which are afforded us in Scripture. We rejoice that he assured the Israelites, "In all places where I record my holy name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee."⁴ We rejoice that he declared to Solomon, "I have chosen and sanctified this house, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually."⁵ We rejoice in the encouragement which the text contains, *I am with you, saith the Lord. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house: and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified.*

And here we might feel with Solomon, and ask in humble wonder, as he did, "Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him; now

⁴ Exod. xx. 24.

⁵ 1 Kings ix. 3.

much less this house that I have builded?"⁶ So might we inquire, Will God indeed be glorified of men? Before him the angels veil their faces; and what is man, that God should be mindful of him, or be glorified by him?

Yet, brethren, there is one thing more strange still; that God should be so little glorified by men. On one side is God the Creator, "in whom our breath is, and whose are all our ways;" "in whom we live and move"—inviting his creatures to glorify him. And on the other side is man, regardless of his Creator, setting up idols in his heart, and forgetting the Lord his Maker. And this, even, where he has revealed himself; where "the true light" shineth, to "lighten every man that cometh into the world."⁷

For is it not amongst the dwellers in our land, who are called to be God's people now, much as it was in Judea formerly with those who were then called to be his people? The prophet Jeremiah says of them, "They have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock: they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judg-

⁶ 1 Kings viii. 27.

⁷ John i. 9.

ment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God. But these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.”⁸

Is it not, is it not, indeed, “a very small remnant” that the Lord hath left us?⁹ “Many are called;” but few, alas! are they, who, even if they honour God with their lips, and take his covenant into their mouths, are not given up to “the world and the things that are in the world,” regardless, practically, of anything beyond; or else are obeying their natural appetites, fulfilling “the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” and openly avowing, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”

It would be profane and impious to speak of those as *glorifying God*, who live with no “fear of God before their eyes.”

When, then, may we say that God is glorified? He is glorified, when any are converted to him, who heretofore, either in accordance with bad principles, or in contradiction to better principles, have been alienated from him, and transgressing against him. It was to glorify God, when David, his eyes being at length opened to the iniquity which he had been committing, acknowledged,

⁸ Jer. v. 3—5.

⁹ Isaiah i. 9.

“ I have sinned against the Lord ;”¹ and said, “ Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” The prodigal glorified God, when he resolved, “ I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”² Zaccheus glorified God, when he said, confessing the error of a worldly, godless life, and whilst he confesses, leaving it, “ Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”³

Here God is glorified, because he is acknowledged. His claim to our obedience, his claim to our service, is not denied. That comes to pass which is spoken by the prophet : “ In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”⁴

And shall we not unite in earnest prayer, that God may be thus glorified in the house now dedicated to his name ? This house, where proclamation will be made continually, “ Let the

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 13 ; Ps. li.

² Luke xv. 18.

³ Luke xix. 8.

⁴ Hosea i. 10.

wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord ; and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

When these words are spoken here, may the Spirit of life " breathe upon the slain," the " dead in trespasses and sins," " that they may live !" ⁵

2. Secondly, God is glorified, when men accept the way of salvation which he has prepared.

My brethren, the King of all the earth saw the world which he had made in rebellion against him ; neglecting, despising, dishonouring, disobeying him ; setting up, as objects of worship, the things which he had given for their use ; paying homage to the works of their own hands ; trampling upon all his laws, and " not liking to retain him in their knowledge."

Yet he did not say, " I will destroy them in a moment ;" " I will pour out my fury upon them. They have sown the wind ; let them reap the whirlwind." These were not his counsels : but " Having one son, his well beloved," he said, " I will send my Son ; it may be they will reverence him when they see him." ⁶ I will send my Son. He shall call them to repentance ; he shall endure

⁵ See Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

⁶ Luke xx. 13.

the penalty which their sin has incurred; and then he shall say, "Be ye reconciled to God." "He has found a ransom" for your offences, and now offers peace, peace to this rebellious family. "So iniquity shall not be your ruin." "He will be to you a God, and ye shall be to him a people."

Such is the language of the Gospel, henceforth to be proclaimed in this house. And when this offer is accepted, and men thank God for his unspeakable gift, and acknowledge that Christ Jesus is "of God made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;"⁷—then God is glorified. Then the way which his wisdom has devised for bringing his creatures to himself, is approved by man's conscience, that faculty within us to which it is proposed. The hand of reconciliation so mercifully stretched out is accepted; and man once more walks with God, not as a rebellious subject, but as a forgiven and favoured son.

In the synagogue of Nazareth, for example, God was not glorified. The Lord himself then stood up,⁸ and opened the book of prophecy, and showed how all that had been written and revealed was now fulfilled. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁸ See Luke iv. 16—29.

because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city."

We see at once, that God was not here glorified. "He had called, and they refused: he had stretched out his hand, but no man regarded."

But it was otherwise in the assembly to which Peter spoke the word of the Lord some three years later, and showed them how God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.⁹ "And they were pricked in their hearts" with godly sorrow, and repented, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, even three thousand souls. This was to glorify God—to own that he "had visited his people," in that he had sent his Son "to bless them, and turn away every one of them from his iniquities."

It was the same with the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched

⁹ Acts ii. 36—41.

the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.”¹ It was the same with the Gentiles of Antioch, when the Jews put from them the gracious message, and “judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.” Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles; and “they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.”²

And thus, in our own time and country, God is glorified, when those who having been enrolled among the disciples of Christ by their parents in their infancy, and are now come to understanding, confirm in their own hearts the covenant of their baptism; and say, in the spirit of the people of Sychar,³ “Now we believe,” not for the faith of our parents, or the religion of our country—but “we have heard him ourselves”—we have come to the knowledge of the truth, and know that “this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

O may they be many, who, being justified by such clear, scriptural, intelligent faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ. “For this is life eternal—to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

3. But, further, God is glorified, when they who have repented, do “works meet for repentance;”

¹ Acts xvii. 2.

² Ib. xiii. 46.

³ See John iv. 42.

when they who like the converted Gentiles have become his people through “faith that is in Christ Jesus,” live up to the purpose for which they were redeemed; live “righteously, soberly, and godly;” and wait for his heavenly kingdom. As the tree is planted that it may bring forth fruit; as the seed is sown, that it may return food to the sower and bread to the eater,—so is the word of God; it is sown that it may be fruitful; it is engrafted on the heart, that the heart may not bear its natural evil produce, but show the fruits of the Spirit, such as grow and are matured on the “trees of God’s planting.”

Then is God glorified. He is dishonoured, grievously dishonoured, when any who profess to take his yoke upon them, walk unworthily “of the vocation wherewith they are called.” He is dishonoured, grievously dishonoured, when any who pretend to be his friends, are really enemies of the cross of Christ; practically “denying the Lord that bought them,” and by their evil ways giving occasion for the adversary to blaspheme. But, on the other hand, God is glorified, when they for whom the precious ransom has been paid, answer the object for which they were redeemed. He was glorified of the Corinthian Christians, of whom Paul writes, “Ye are our epistle, known and read

of all men.”⁴ Such was their conduct, that they furnished a living example to the world around them. All might say, “See what God hath wrought:” see how the religion of Christ Jesus is “the wisdom of God and the power of God:” see how he “has commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that all may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Now to lead men thus, brethren, is also the purpose of the church which has been here raised.

From the beginning, faithful men were ordained in every church, that they who have believed in Christ might be continually instructed to maintain good works; that they might be taught how God had chosen them to sanctification; and how sanctification consists in opposing the evils of the natural heart, in resisting the temptations of the world, in living as the people of God, who “by patient continuance in well-doing are seeking for glory and honour and immortality.”

And truly, brethren, it is a narrow way in which the Christian walks, and greatly needs a guide. It is by no plain, or smooth, or easy course, that we must enter into the kingdom of God. The heart of man is not like the fountain of water, which, once turned into its proper channel, can hardly be

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 2.

diverted out of it, and will continue to flow on unto the end. Very different is the case; and the regenerate heart may rather be likened to a stream which is forced out of its natural bed, and can only be kept within its new course by continual watchfulness and labour. Line is needful upon line, and precept upon precept. Principles once laid, yet require to be constantly renewed and confirmed. Errors of opinion must be continually refuted, and errors of practice continually restrained. If men sleep, tares will be found in the field in which good seed was sown. It is only by using all diligence, that to faith can be added "virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity." ⁵

Let it be thy good pleasure, O Lord God, to be thus glorified by those who worship in this house! May the flock be known as the flock of the true Shepherd, in that they hear his voice, and follow him, and are not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour!

4. Finally, brethren, God is glorified when man is saved. This is the crown of all; and truly is it the glory of God. Man is saved. A being so

⁵ 2 Pet. i. 8.

corrupt as man—(and what heart is there, which knoweth not its own plague?⁶)—a being who has to contend “not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers” leagued together for his destruction—a being exposed to the wiles of the devil, the snares of the world, and the desires of the flesh,—is yet enabled to overcome all these enemies of his soul, and is “made partaker of the divine nature,” and is raised to that kingdom “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Truly is this the glory of God. Whoever is made meet for the heavenly inheritance, will ascribe it to him alone. “He that glorieth will glory in the Lord ;” will acknowledge that his Spirit influenced him, his wisdom guided him, his goodness converted him, his power defended him; and that with anything less than that all-sufficient hand, he must have sunk under the dangers by which he was assailed.

And here, too, brethren, let us remember the means which God condescends to use; the blessing which belongs to his house and its appointed ministrations. Here is the Scripture continually set forth, which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. And here the minister will wait in humble

⁶ 1 Kings viii. 38.

dependence on the promise, that they who take heed to themselves and to the doctrine, shall both save themselves and those that hear them.”⁷ Here he will reprove, rebuke, exhort with all authority; here watch for the various opportunities which demand his care; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; dispensing to every age and every class their portion in due season; confirming those who are steadfast in the faith; comforting the weak-hearted, and helping the feeble to rise, till in the end they are “more than conquerors,” and able to do all things in the power of Christ who strengtheneth them.

And, now, brethren, if such are the blessings which may be expected here, may not the words of Scripture be justly repeated once more, “That it was in thine heart to build a house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart”?⁸

How soon is the benefit exhausted, if, indeed, there is any benefit at all from the common uses to which money is applied! It is gone—and what does it leave behind? Perhaps a vain regret that we have not proved better stewards of God’s gifts.

But mark the difference here. Every sinner who is converted from the error of his way; every

⁷ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

⁸ 1 Kings viii. 18.

soul which is made wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus ; every member of the church who, being cleansed from his sins, serves God with a quiet mind ; every saint who, having finished his earthly career, is added to “ the spirits made perfect ;” each one of these, in every stage of his eventful way, brings a fresh return of interest to what has been here expended. I need not urge you that are now present to claim to yourselves a share in this return. What is thus employed will not “ perish in the using ;” nay, will acquire its real value when nothing else is valuable. For when “ this world passeth away, and the lust thereof,” there is that which abideth for ever. “ We, brethren, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And then they that have sown, and they that have reaped ; they that have built the house, and they that have frequented it ; they that have ministered, and they that have been ministered unto ; they that have repented, and they that have exhorted to repentance ; they that have proclaimed the truth, and they that have obeyed it,—shall rejoice together ; rejoice together, in that GOD IS GLORIFIED, AND MAN IS SAVED.

SERMON XIV.

THE DUTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF ACTIVE
EXERTIONS IN THE CAUSE OF RELIGION.

Hebrews x. 24, 25.

Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Let us consider one another. This is peculiarly a CHRISTIAN exhortation. The Gospel of Christ first taught men *to consider one another* at all: still more, to consider them with a view to their *love and good works*. The common principle of the human heart is the principle of selfishness. This is the inheritance derived from Adam. Every man seeks his own, and no man another's welfare. On the other hand, no sooner does the grace of

God touch the heart, than it becomes 'warmed with tenderness towards all. Even the negroes and savages, who have been brought out of darkness by the pious labours of our countrymen, offer the first-fruits of their faith by their works of charity, and give "such as they have" towards the conversion of others. It must be so ; because the Spirit of God renews the heart of man after the image of God, and "God is love." Where, then, the Spirit of God is, there love must also be.

But if our natural disposition is indolent self-indulgence ; and charity, whether spiritual or temporal, the work of divine grace upon the heart ; then we see the need of the apostle's injunction, that *we stir up the gift of God which is in us, and provoke one another to love and to good works.*

And this, I presume, is the chief design of meetings like the present.¹ We, who compose them, are in the main like-minded, as to the consequence of enmity against God, and the necessity of warning the ignorant, and the careless, and the ungodly of the world to flee from the wrath to come, and seek refuge in the cross of Christ. But we know that it is our nature, our sinful nature, to neglect this conviction of our hearts ; to prefer ease to

¹ The anniversary of the Prayer Book and Homily Society.

exertion, self-indulgence to self-denial. We know that we live in a world, the whole stream of which runs contrary to Scripture in this thing. And it is impossible not to be carried down the stream, unless we set ourselves against it, and oppose it manfully, by every argument which reason and revelation enable us to employ. And therefore we do not *forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, as one of the means by which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we may be excited to fresh exertions.

With this view of the duty assigned me this evening, I shall first advert briefly to some objections which are raised against the labours of spiritual love ; and then point out such encouragements as require us to persevere in them.

I. The grand motive to all christian exertion is contained in the words of St. John : “ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Those, of course, cannot be affected by this motive, who have never felt or understood the value of such love displayed towards themselves. It is natural and consistent that they should leave the heathen abroad, or the profligate at home, to the condition in which what they call the course of circumstances has placed them.

But there are other pretexts for indifference, more suited to our consideration now, which pervert the minds of many amongst us. They are not without a sense of the evil that is in the world. They are peculiarly alive to it. But they despair of its remedy. Or they perceive so much evil resulting from the remedy itself, that they scruple to apply it, and sit down in contented indolence. Satisfied with their personal piety, or engrossed with concerns more immediately interesting, they find no plan of general benevolence pure enough, or safe enough, to receive their active co-operation.

It is not, however, a reasonable objection to schemes which promise the melioration of mankind, that no scheme can be so devised or executed as to be free from all danger of evil. We do not pretend this of any human institution. We need not to be reminded, that tares will grow up in every field which is cultivated by the sons of Adam. Who can answer that no secular feelings shall intrude into his works of piety? Who can answer that no partial or narrow spirit has cast a stain upon exertions which had universal benevolence for their object? Who will presume that his own views of duty have never led him to judge others uncharitably; that his heart has been preserved free from all taint of personal vanity or

ambition? We have need, my brethren, even in our best works, to “watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.” “We dare not call God to reckoning for them, as if we had him in our debt books:”² for if he were to weigh their merits, instead of pardoning their offences, who could stand? Who could abide his exact, but too just, scrutiny?

Still, what is our duty in this case? Surely, as in all other cases, to guard, and to pray, and to labour against the sins which so easily beset us; but not to remain inactive till all evil is removed: otherwise we must find a different world in which to serve God at all, or agents of a different mould must be employed. Even the apostles were only freed slowly and by degrees from the prejudices of their education, and the errors which had grown up with them: and some of the natural infirmities which long adhered to their character, are recorded, partly, no doubt, for our warning, and partly, perhaps, for our consolation.

The evils, then, which sometimes insinuate themselves into measures of benevolent exertion, are not reasons for declining such exertion.

Neither is it a sufficient cause for inactivity, that

² Hooker, Sermon on Justification.

evil will exist in the world, and, if it is diverted from one channel, will break out again in another. Such reasoners allow the danger of a careless and ignorant condition : they allow, too, that the welfare of our fellow-creatures is not to be treated with indifference : but they argue, One evil is balanced against another ; and if you get rid of that indifference, you open the door to other mischiefs, and fill the world with emulation, or ostentation, or hypocrisy.

Notions like these are a barrier to every improvement, and paralyse all energy. They introduce a species of quietism, which is wholly inconsistent with the will of God respecting mankind. They keep us reasoning, when we ought to be acting. They leave us in a state of fear and hesitation, when we ought to be “ quitting ourselves like men,” and “ hoping all things.” No one can collect, from the tenor of Scripture, that our life on earth was designed to be a life of contemplative piety, or our religion to consist in theological speculation.

II. But indeed the will of God upon this subject is disclosed in another way. It is made known to us in a manner the most encouraging,—by the

blessing which he allows to attend exertions undertaken in his service, and intended for his glory. In matters of plain and acknowledged duty, we have no concern with results: the duty is with us, the event with God. Every minister of the Gospel, for example, is bound to labour for the flock committed to his charge, with earnestness, and zeal, and persevering care, independently of the success which may apparently ensue. Whether or not it be the Divine will to bless his labours, his obligation remains indisputable and unalterable. “Preach thou the word; be instant in season and out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.” So, again, every christian church is bound to extend as widely as possible the privileges it enjoys; to make known on earth the ways of God, “his saving health among all nations.” Whether those nations reject the word, or accept it with joy, we must communicate freely what we have freely received.

But although the general obligation to spiritual charity is clear, like that of temporal beneficence, the particular mode of either must often be determined by experience; and should it be found, on trial, that any particular measure proved injurious—nay, even that it produced no effectual benefit, could show no evidence of divine blessing—then

there would be just reason to review, and perhaps to change, our method of proceeding.

But I argue that, in regard to the exertions which have been employed and the measures which have been devised in this country for the spiritual benefit of mankind, we have all the testimony of the approbation of God which can be derived from his blessing.

If we look to cases of individual exertion, rare indeed are the examples of any who labour in the work of spiritual husbandry, without reason to be thankful for the assistance they have enjoyed, and the benefits they have been enabled to confer. Ministers usually find, that in proportion as they devote themselves to the service of their Lord with simplicity, with earnestness, with diligence, in that proportion they become instrumental in awakening, and enlightening, and edifying the objects of their care. Always imperfect in their characters, and often humble in ability, they are assisted by a grace which is "sufficient for them," and supported by a strength which is made perfect in weakness. Though it is not a Paul who plants, or an Apollos who waters, yet God vouchsafes to give the increase.

We see a like result, if we extend our view beyond the limited sphere of parochial labours, and

survey the great family of the world. The labourer in this moral wilderness is not without his reward. It is common, indeed, to measure a hemisphere, and calculate the multitudes which cover it, and conclude that little has been done. But the question is, has little been done in proportion to the means employed? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal:" neither must we complain, with the carnal conqueror, that nothing has been achieved because something yet remains to be effected. If we till a whole kingdom with five yoke of oxen, we cannot wonder that much of the ground lies fallow. Contemplate, rather, the result even of these disproportionate attempts. Consider the effects produced by individual labourers. One such, of blessed memory, adventured upon a vast and untried field; yet it did not appear that God disowned his zealous servant: many independent witnesses have concurred in assuring us, that Satan can hardly quench the fire which Henry Martyn kindled alone in Persia.

The indefatigable efforts of another individual succeeded in turning the current of opinion throughout the whole land, respecting an Ecclesiastical Establishment in India. It pleased God to bend the heart of the nation, almost as the heart of one man: within a few years the chimerical

vision became a substantial reality ; the fabric rose as a city set on an hill ; and now its light shines before the heathen world, that they may see its brightness, and, as we trust, “ glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Indeed, with regard to India generally, if we complain and murmur, we are ungrateful to Him whose blessing we implore. When we say that little has been effected, we judge from our wishes, rather than our exertions ; or from the wants of that vast wilderness, rather than from the means used to supply them. The success has not been disproportioned to the labour actually available—available against the impediments of language and of distance, and the difficulty of exertion in a country where exertion is always pain, and, as we have unfortunately seen, too often death itself. God has not “ left himself without witness,” but encourages us still to plough and sow, and look for his rain and fruitful seasons.

The present occasion, however, directs our attention to collective efforts, rather than to those of individuals. And here also we may find that which may justly cheer and animate us.

During many years—many more than for the honour of our country it is pleasing to reflect upon—one lamp of christian light was alone set up by us

in India,—that which proceeded from the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. Yet how bright was the lustre which it shed! And how greatly was that single effort honoured! So that we are told by authority which is now become venerable in our eyes, that the churches so founded and supported count their members by hundreds and by thousands.³

In the course of the last thirty years, the experiment of collective exertions has been tried on an extensive scale. New institutions have sprung up, wherever it appeared that the glory of God might be promoted; and those which before existed have “enlarged the place of their tents,” have “lengthened their cords and strengthened their stakes,” and redoubled their energies with the increase of their powers. And it has not been in vain: it has not been without a blessing. To enter into particulars, would be foreign from the present purpose. But I appeal to the wonderful diffusion of the Scriptures—wonderful in itself, and still more wonderful, if contrasted with the former apathy of those who possessed them:—I appeal to the interest taken in this work by multitudes of all ranks, and in very many countries:—I appeal to the increased use of the Scriptures amongst young

³ Bishop Middleton.

and old, in schools and in families :—I appeal to the improved instruction of our villages, to the attention which our crowded towns have awakened, to the increased spirituality of our ministers, to the more scriptural and energetic doctrines of our pulpits :—I appeal to the growing numbers, who, in some shape or other, are taking an active part in the cause of religion ; who, for the sake of doing good, are denying themselves other pleasures, and subduing private feelings, and resisting worldly inclinations. To these, and to many other outward and general signs, I appeal, when I affirm that not in vain have pious and zealous men enlisted in the service of their God, and endeavoured at every opening to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer. No, brethren, not in vain. If much less were effectually done, and much more done indiscreetly or unwisely, I should still pity the man who could travel from Dan to Beer-sheba, and complain that all is barren, because he saw many wastes still unreclaimed, and many weeds still flourishing. It is not all barren. The Angel is gone forth, “ having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Christian principles are widely diffused. “ The brother of low degree is taught to rejoice in that he is exalted,

and the rich in that he is made low." Christian instruction is extensively provided: little children are suffered to come unto their Saviour, and forbidden not: out of the mouth of babes and sucklings praise is perfected. Christian charity has remembered those who had been long forgotten: "Such as sit in darkness and the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they had rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High"—these are made acquainted with the mercies of God: upon their prison has the light shined. This Society has especially taken care, that "they that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters," should hear the words of the Lord, and be taught his wonders in the deep. Surely it is marvellous in our eyes; and surely it is the Lord's doing. His arm is not shortened, that it will not save; neither his ear heavy, that it will not hear. Whilst enough, far more than enough remains undone to employ and stimulate the zealous, enough is accomplished to confute and shame the quietist. Let him up and be doing: let him rise: God calleth him. We are not in that state,

⁴ The Prayer Book and Homily Society has agents in the port of London and in our principal maritime towns, who supply books to the vessels which sail from them.

that our strength is to sit still. Our motto must rather be, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

And such has been the principle of the Society which calls us together. It hastened to occupy a space, which the measures of other Societies left vacant: it proposed to supply a want which the exertions of other Societies created. The circulation of the Scriptures at home was daily increasing. But the first effect of Scripture, when received into the heart, is to dispose it towards prayer. We provide the means of prayer. We provide it in various languages. The Bible is conveyed abroad into countries where it has been almost a stranger. There, too, we trust, it will excite a spirit of prayer; and in the Liturgy of our church, which it is the object of the Society to circulate, the pious mind is furnished with a manual of devotion, in which Christians of every degree may meet with comfort and instruction. Here the penitent finds words, in which he may acknowledge and lament his unworthiness: here the mourner learns to spread his sorrows before the Lord: here the prosperous is enabled to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving: here the humblest and the youngest

Christian may be assisted to pour out the feelings of his soul : and here the most advanced Christian may clothe in the purest language all that the sublimest piety can feel. Multitudes have used this language in seeking mercies, or acknowledging them, who are now released from the imperfections of all human utterance : multitudes have thus lamented their transgressions, who have no longer any occasion for penitence ; for where they are, is no more sin, and theirs has been “ washed in the blood of the Lamb :” multitudes have offered these supplications, who are now far removed beyond the reach of sorrow, or crying, or pain ; they have died in the Lord, and they rest from their labours. What reflection, brethren, can more justly animate us to follow their good example, that with them we may be partakers of the heavenly kingdom ?

The HOMILIES also, the second object of the Society’s attention, have an especial value at the present period : valuable they must always be, for their intrinsic merits. In the language of a distinguished prelate, “ they abound in examples of a manly, nervous, unaffected eloquence—solicitous, not about words, but things ; and often coming home to the heart and conscience with a deep, forcible conviction, much resembling that of the sacred Scriptures. They show a thorough ac-

quaintance with human nature, and with human life too, as it existed in the ‘olden time.’ ”⁵

But, in addition to this general excellence, they have the peculiar merit of being appropriate to the present exigency, when extraordinary exertions are employed to extend the faith which they especially assail. They contain the record of our Reformers’ doctrine; therefore we must always venerate them: but they contain it also, as preached in a “plain, popular, and effective way,” to those who were emerging from papal darkness. Confuting the errors which still, we grieve to think, delude and bewilder so many of our countrymen at home, as well as the greater part of Christendom abroad; and promulgating the truths by which the rest of Christendom was first delivered from those errors; let us hope that the grace of God may again attend them, and scatter the mists which have overspread the face of Christianity; always obscuring its brightness, and too often extinguishing its light. And surely the anticipation is not unreasonable. Suppose the Romanist awakened to inquiry: he naturally looks to a church which, though decided in opposition to his own, opposes it only where his own has deserted Scripture. He finds there a discipline such as he has been accustomed to venerate as apostolic: he

⁵ Bishop Jebb.

finds there a system of doctrine, which, the more he examines Scripture or antiquity, the more he will find agreeing with that which Peter proclaimed, when he exhorted men to “repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins :” and he finds there formularies—he has been used to value formularies—comprehensive yet simple, intelligible though sublime. Why should he not “fall down and worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth ?”

But whether it please God, or not, thus far to bless our efforts ; yet, when I find this Society dispersing the Liturgy of our Church and Selections from her Homilies in most of the European and in many of the Indian languages, I cannot but rejoice to think, that what I believe to be truth, eternal truth, the surest rule of faith, the safest guide of practice, the purest help of piety, is “gone out into all lands, and its words unto the end of the world.”

These, then, are the motives to spiritual charity ; the motives *provoking us to love and to good works*. God has assigned us this duty ; has appointed, that in this way one class of mankind should benefit another. And, further, that we may not

be faint or weary in well-doing, the exercise of this duty God encourages with his blessing.

An important consideration crowns the whole : *Exhort one another*, says the apostle, *and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.*

If St. Paul here alludes to that day, which he knew to be at hand, when the Son of man should “come with power” and inflict just vengeance upon the Jewish nation, he speaks with a confidence which we have no right to claim : for we do not pretend to the spirit of prophecy. We dare not predict what *day* may be *approaching*. Certainly there are “signs of the times” which rouse our anxious attention, and may justly excite our hopes ; signs of shaking among the nations ; signs of impatience under the fetters of bigotry and error ; signs, too, we fondly trust, of spiritual life and consciousness. There are still more hopeful signs in the increasing energy of those who “fear the Lord, and think upon his name :” they “speak often one to another,” *and provoke one another to love, and to good works.*

We would not presume to speculate on the designs of Providence, or arrogate a claim to divine favour. Yet it cannot, we think, be unimportant

in the scheme of Infinite Wisdom, that so many institutions should have simultaneously arisen, independent in their measures, yet connected in their principles ; tending to the same objects, yet possessing all the advantage of individual energy. May they be accepted by him whose glory they desire to serve, as some proofs of faith and watchfulness in this highly favoured, but still too ungrateful land !

But, whatever other day may be approaching, we are sure of one—emphatically **THE DAY** in Scripture, before which all others sink into insignificance. For what is a year, or a hundred, or a thousand years, in comparison of the eternity which is to follow ? How trifling, unless taken in reference to that eternity, how trifling is the importance of any event to ourselves, or to our fellow-creatures, which can happen before “ the first heaven and the first earth are passed away ? ” “ We, brethren, according to the promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Now, the coming of that day of God may be near, or may be distant, when “ the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat : ” but one day is indisputably approaching to us all, — the day which shall cut the thread of our earthly lives, and

fix the everlasting destiny of the soul. For what we are found on that day, such we shall be found when we “appear before the judgment-seat of God, to receive according to the things done in the body.” And, upon the authority of the Judge himself, we are assured of the important place which christian charity will hold in determining our christian character. What could we more reasonably expect him to consider? How can the state of the heart be more surely indicated? This is not the time to speak of temporal wants: but indifference towards the spiritual wants of others—indifference while those around us “are destroyed for lack of knowledge”—must be totally inconsistent with christian faith; must either show a most unworthy sense of the value of the Gospel to ourselves, or a lamentable disregard to the salvation of others. In his wisdom, therefore, God has made our doings in this respect a test of our faith. “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, We knew it not; shall not He that pondereth the soul consider this? and shall not he render to every one according to his works?”

How unlike is such indifference to the example which we are taught to imitate! How unlike the

example which heaven itself would offer us ! For if we could mount up to heaven, or if heaven were to open before us, and show us the employments of its blessed inhabitants, we should not find the highest interests of men there treated with unconcern. We should witness the same purpose which actuates our best and purest exertions, carried on without the errors into which we daily fall. We should see divine benevolence protecting those who have chosen God for their portion, and ministering to their several circumstances—in one case, exercising forbearance ; in another, dispensing comfort ; in another, assisting trials ; in another, appointing salutary warnings. We should see angels concerned in the spiritual welfare of mankind ; grieving over their hardness of heart and contempt of God's word, and rejoicing in their repentance and restoration. We should see him who is “ God over all, blessed for ever,” guarding the interests of his church, directing the minds of those appointed to uphold it, and animating their services ; fulfilling his gracious assurance that he will be with them, “ even to the end of the world.” Such is the pattern set us, and therefore we cannot err :—for we are taught to love one another, even as Christ loved us ; to be merciful, even as our Father who is in heaven is merciful. No ; we

cannot err—for we should be misled by Scripture itself—we cannot err when we unite ourselves to those who take their stand on the eminence of universal charity, and look out towards the great family of man, not for opportunities of selfish interest or national aggrandizement, but for openings to religious usefulness. And why should their choice be treated with contempt, or their doings with suspicion? Private advantage, temporary gain, is sought at sufficient expense of time and pains; let some be spared for advantage not our own, for good that is not perishable. Let those whom God has permitted to labour in his church, or those whom he has inclined to promote his glory in the world, be allowed to *consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works*. Enough of time will still be engaged in the pursuit of wealth and honour: enough of immortal mind will be engrossed in the changes and chances of transitory kingdoms: enough of hearts will be devoted to short-lived pleasures, or overwhelmed with earthly cares. Let ours, brethren, be for a while withdrawn from those dying interests, those important vanities, and raised above them to a love of heavenly things. Our best resolves are weak, our best works imperfect; let us strengthen and amend them by all the means of grace, and all the

hopes of glory. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.”

SERMON XV.

MOTIVES FOR PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL.

Acts viii. 4.

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

WE have a striking instance here—and it is one of many—of the way in which the wrath of man, his evil passions and designs, are made to minister to the praise of God, and the accomplishment of his purposes.

“The grace of God, which bringeth salvation,” had been now for some time proclaimed in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, in obedience to the will of its divine Author, who had designed, in his mysterious mercy, that they who had compassed or consented to his death, should be the first to receive the offer of his propitiation. He sent his apostles, in the first place, “to the lost sheep of the

house of Israel :” “ to the Jew first, and afterward to the Gentile.” Through their means many had heard of Him whom “ God had exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” To many he had already proved so : for they that believed had now become “ multitudes both of men and women ; and the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.” ¹

Not, however, without that consequence which the Lord had so constantly predicted ; not without jealousy on the part of the chief priests and rulers ; not without opposition and persecution. We are told, “ At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church ; entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.”

Here, then, we might suppose the infant church is stifled in the birth ; and the hard heart and unbelief of man has rejected the mercy of God, who hides his face in anger, and leaves those to perish, who count themselves unworthy of eternal life.

¹ Acts v. 14 ; vi. 7.

Not so. His gracious purpose might be promoted even by the enmity which assailed these first believers; who, though persecuted, were not forsaken; though cast down, were not destroyed. *They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.* To whatever place or country they fled, whether within the remoter districts of Judea, or beyond its limits to the various cities of Asia, where their connexions might be settled, and they might find a refuge among friends: wherever this protection was offered them, they made a return of infinite value; they told the glad tidings of redemption; they spoke of what God had done for mankind; how he had “so loved the world as to send his only Son, that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” And they spoke of what he had done for themselves in particular; how they had received this truth, and rejoiced in it with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and how, rather than renounce it, and forfeit the peace which they had found, they had left their country and their homes, and all that was dearest to them in the world, looking for a better country, an inheritance eternal in the heavens. Of this we are assured by the sacred historian, when he acquaints us, that *they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word.*

Now it is both interesting in itself, and agreeable to our object on the present occasion, to consider why they did so. They were not the apostles, to whom an especial commission had been given, instructing them to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.² The apostles continued for the present at Jerusalem. These were the mixed body of believers, who, if they had remained in their own city, would have fallen under the malice of Saul and his party, and been cast into prison. And these, we are told, when scattered abroad, *went everywhere preaching the word*; or, as appears more exactly in the Greek original, carrying the glad tidings, proclaiming the word of salvation;³ not formally preaching it, but conveying the intelligence, and laying the first elements of truth, and thus preparing the way for those who should come after with a more direct commission from above.

Let us, then, endeavour to enter into the minds of these persons, and inquire what induced them so to act as to be here recorded by the historian among the early propagators of the Gospel.

² Acts viii. 1.

³ Εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον : and afterwards (xi. 20), εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν.—See an elaborate note by Hammond on this passage.

Consider, first, their own case. They had received for themselves the truth,—the great truth,—that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:” that as there is, on the one hand, “no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” so, likewise, there is no salvation in any other; “for there is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved.”

This truth they had themselves received; and because they had received it, they were now scattered abroad,—driven from their homes.

Such was their case. How was it with those to whom they came? Those to whom they came were their Jewish connexions, who had been led to settle in various parts of Asia. These they would find in the very state from which they had been themselves so recently delivered; as described by St. Paul, “resting in the law, and making their boast of God; but through breaking the law dishonouring God:”⁴ going about to establish their own righteousness, and ignorant of God’s righteousness;”⁵ depending upon ordinances and ceremonies from which the spirit had departed, and which remained a lifeless form: with none of the temper and disposition which belongs to the kingdom of heaven;—not pure in heart; not poor in

⁴ See Rom. ii. 17—24.

⁵ Ibid. x. 3.

spirit; not meek; not merciful;—but proud, unhallowed, sensual, and uncharitable. St. Paul, in his own character, could be no unfavourable specimen of the ordinary Jewish people; he who speaks of himself, as having been, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”⁶ And yet how severely he condemns his former self when he compares the old man with the new;—when he contrasts what he had once been, with what he felt himself to have become after that the grace of God in Christ Jesus had made him partaker of the divine image. We ourselves, he says, looking back upon his unconverted state,—“we ourselves were once disobedient, deceitful; serving divers lusts and pleasures: living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another.”⁷

With those, therefore, of the disciples who had taken refuge among friends of their own nation, there was great reason why they should *preach the word*, and tell them of that blood by which “all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses;” — should tell them of that Spirit which is able to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; and to renew them in right-

⁶ Phil. iii. 5.

⁷ Titus iii. 3.

eousness and true holiness, after the image of him that created them.⁸

But, besides those who preached the word to none but the Jews only, we read of others who proceeded further. Some of them which *were scattered abroad* were “men of Cyprus and Cyrene; which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.”⁹

Who, and what may have been the persons here spoken of as the Grecians,¹ is uncertain. But thus much is evident from the manner in which they are mentioned: they were persons of heathen origin. If hitherto they had been ignorant of God, living in idolatrous habits, then would the Christians be still more powerfully urged to declare the word of truth. They would feel what some years afterwards was felt by the apostle Paul, while waiting at Athens for Silas and Timotheus: and “his spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the people wholly given to idolatry.”² He had no particular commission to preach the Gospel at Athens. His object was elsewhere. But he could not witness the dishonour of God, and the ruin of immortal souls, without an effort in their

⁸ Acts xiii. 39.

⁹ See Acts xi. 19—21.

¹ Ἑλληνισταί.

² Acts xvii. 16.

cause. These, he must have thought within himself, these unhappy beings are formed for an everlasting existence; but are so living in their present state, that they must be for ever excluded from the presence of God and the glory of his power. They are strangers to the living and true God; ignorant of his will. They are strangers to their own destiny; not awakened to perceive the sinfulness of sin, not aware of the bond of iniquity under which they are lying, and the eternal death which is suspended over them.

And what should one do in such a case, whom God had made to differ, who had received the word of salvation;—what should he do, when surrounded by his fellow-creatures, still lying in darkness and the shadow of death? Surely he must warn them to repent, for that God “has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness:” surely he must show them how they may flee from the wrath to come: must make known the gracious assurance, that “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” and that “whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

Thus, at least, the apostle felt and judged and acted: and “therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons,

and in the market daily with them that met with him."

Brethren, can we be surprised at this? Or can we wonder, if those whom the text speaks of as *scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word*? Is it anything more than a proof that they believed what they professed; that they valued what they had received?

The wages of sin is death. And the transgression of the law is sin. And idolatry is transgression of the law. And all the wickedness into which corrupt and unconverted nature runs, is transgression of the law: all envy, and malice, and covetousness, and sensuality, and impurity. These transgressions they saw abounding: such transgressors they had before their eyes, and were daily conversant with. And if they believed that death, eternal death, must follow as the result of the practices in which these were living, how could they fail to preach the word, or to beseech all to whom they had access, to be reconciled to God?

For, if "the wages of sin is death," so, on the other hand, "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ." But "how should these believe in him of whom they had not heard?" Could they, who had both heard and believed, could they fail

to tell of him whom God had sent, in fulfilment of his earliest promises, to bring men to himself? to “die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification?”

And yet it is true, they might have failed. They might have so lightly esteemed this mercy, that intercourse with a thoughtless or idolatrous world should efface it from their minds: they might have deemed sin to be a venial evil, which God will never be severe to mark, and especially will not visit upon the ignorant and uninstructed; they might have feared to oppose received errors, and condemn prevailing habits: they might have preferred silence, though the silence of the grave, to the words of heavenly life, if it must be a stirring energetic life, and rouse them from indolence and calm.

It might have been so with them; we know it too well. We know it from experience. We know how far easier it is to go with the stream ourselves, and suffer others to be carried down by it, than to meet, and resist, and stem the overwhelming tide. But they did not yield to this natural indolence. They were not kept back by an evil heart of unbelief. The Spirit of God was too strong within them. The love of Christ too powerfully constrained them; the love of man

encouraged them ; and they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard. They knew it to be the will of God, that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth. And therefore they knew that it must be his will, that whoever possessed that knowledge, and had been himself blessed with the offer of salvation, should communicate it wherever he had the means : should extend it as widely as possible, and should begin by extending it to those around him. Through their silent apathy, through their languid indolence, through their unfaithfulness and timidity, should a weak, a corrupt, an ignorant fellow-creature perish, for whom Christ died ? Where then would be the sign by which the disciples of Christ are to be known and read of all men, that they “ live not unto themselves, but unto him who loved them, and gave himself for them ? ” ³ And that, because “ God so loved them, they also have love one towards another ? ”

Thus it is one of the divine properties of our religion, that it contains within itself a provision for its own dissemination. He who has received it for himself, has from that time an interest in every human soul ; for the Redeemer, whose he

³ 2 Cor. v. 15.

is, and whom he serves, “tasted death for every man.” And as he has an interest in souls so precious, so dearly purchased, so has he also an interest in the glory of his Saviour: and from both these feelings he is earnestly desirous to deliver them that are drawn unto death, them that are ready to be slain. It is, in fact, the operation of this principle, which makes the one great sacrifice, once offered, effectual to its merciful purpose. Without it, the light of truth must become extinct: Christ would have died in vain. A fresh revelation must be made in every century, and a separate exhibition of it given in every country under heaven.

My christian brethren, is this sufficiently considered? We hear frequent lamentations, not always unmixed with wonder, that notwithstanding the goodness of God in sending his beloved Son, so large a portion of mankind is still immersed in the darkness and grossness of heathenism. And well may we deplore the fact. But on whom should we rest the blame? Have men no concern in this? God has prepared a mighty scheme, planned from the foundation of the world, foretold from the earliest ages, commenced by a long series of antecedent means, and, at last,

completed by signs and wonders, and mighty deeds. It is finished; and the prophecies receive their accomplishment: the types disclose their reality; the ordinances their substance: the miracles their purpose. And the issue is, REDEMPTION.

This mysterious blessing, this inestimable mercy, he reveals to his creatures. And then he commits it, as he does all other blessings, to those who have received it, to be by them imparted to successive generations, that the light which has been once set up, may lighten every man that cometh into the world.

And yet we may still say, as of old, darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Would it have remained so, if all had felt what these first believers felt, and done what these first believers did, and they *that were scattered abroad had gone everywhere preaching the word*? Would it have been so, for example, as far as our own country is concerned—if our religious activity had kept pace with our civil and political activity—if spiritual zeal had accompanied the growth of our commerce, and the extension of our national power?

Alas ! we cannot but observe the contrast. Men are led, by the exercise of their faculties, to find new means by which oceans may be crossed and countries traversed, and the different quarters of the earth are united to one another. “ Verily, there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.” “ Many go to and fro, and knowledge is increased.”

But what knowledge is first thought of, first attained, first communicated ? Is it the knowledge how God’s honour may be advanced, and the kingdom of Christ enlarged, and those souls saved, which now lie in darkness and the shadow of death ? Is it not rather the knowledge of the wealth which may be procured, of the covetousness which may be gratified, of the luxury which may be enjoyed, of the increase of power which may be gained ? Distant regions are penetrated ; new territories are opened to the enterprise of our merchants, or the valour of our armies ; and it is seen once more, as in the days of Solomon :—
“ the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.”⁴

Where are those, meanwhile, who go every-

⁴ Psalm lxxii. 10.

where *preaching the word*? How might that time be hastened, when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,” if the multitudes who are carried from the east to the west, from the north to the south, in the pursuit of wealth, or in the exercise of military duty, bore with them the faith and zeal of those who were scattered abroad by the persecution that was at Jerusalem! They would not, in the exact sense, be preachers of the word: though they would be ready, each for himself, in the presence of idolaters and gainsayers, to “give an answer of the hope that was in him.” But they would open and prepare the way for the more regular ambassadors of Christ: they would invite, encourage, assist, support them; and never rest, till the idols which they saw around them were cast down, and the darkness dispersed from the face of the land, and the kingdom of Christ erected over the prostrate throne of Satan.

Would that the time might come, when this should describe the real state of things! At present it is far otherwise. Yet that nothing has been done or is in progress, it would be ungrateful and unjust to say. Enough is done to show what might be effected, if the heart of the nation, as the heart of one man, were actuated by a zeal for God,

and a desire to promote his glory. But, on the other hand, so much is left neglected, as to prove how grievously as a nation we fall short of the faith which as a nation we profess:—how easily we can suffer multitudes to remain in that lost state, which moved the compassion of the Son of God;—can permit even our fellow-countrymen, who have quitted their native land, to be destitute of those means of grace, without which piety languishes, morality gives way to temptation, and ultimately faith expires. How different from the conduct, which I have brought before your consideration, of those who were first called Christians? How different from the conduct of the apostle, whose spirit was stirred within him, when “he saw the people wholly given to idolatry?” Alas! wide as are the fields within our reach, and some of them even white unto the harvest, how few the labourers! Not less inadequate to the necessity of the case and the greatness of the work, than if the harvest of a province were committed to a single reaper.

It is some consolation, in the midst of so much that must be lamented, to know that the Society⁵

⁵ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

which assembles us to-day, during one hundred and thirty years has exerted itself to redeem the national character in this point, and to maintain the consistency of a christian people. And by every sincere Christian it must be hailed and welcomed : for it enables them to effect what individually they must be most anxious to promote, but what as individuals few could achieve : it enables them to assist in making known on earth the ways of God, “ his saving health unto all nations.” Here is the reservoir which collects the various drops supplied from various sources : and from hence they are again poured out, and divided into numerous streams, in which the waters of life are continually flowing. Yet is there still remaining many a parched and barren land, where no water is. There are many of our countrymen, no doubt, who in such lands of barrenness to which they have been driven, are thirsting for those draughts of eternal truth which they have left behind, and cannot now recover. There are many others of our fellow-creatures, still more to be lamented for, who have either lost, or never known, such spiritual taste, and need that it should be excited in them. You will not, I am sure, permit this stream to fail. You will unite your endeavours and your prayers, that it may still flow on with a supply more and

more abundant, till the utmost parts of the earth are reached. And may it please God so to enlarge his kingdom, that throughout the whole world “ whoever thirsts,” may receive freely from the “ wells of salvation,” and find refreshment and rest to his soul !

SERMON XVI.

THE DUTY OF SUPPORTING MISSIONS.

Matt. x. 8.

Freely ye have received : freely give.

I HAVE selected this passage as the basis of my discourse, because it contains, in short compass, the scriptural argument for Missionary exertions.

It may be right, perhaps, to premise, that I take the spirit of the passage, rather than its literal meaning. In connexion with the context, its literal meaning may be no more than this:—"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:" but beware of seeking any temporal remuneration for such exercise of your powers,—powers bestowed on you for a purpose very different from that of personal advantage: *Freely ye*

have received, freely give. Ye have been endued with extraordinary gifts, in every sense gratuitously : their author chose you to possess them, and was not chosen by you : he gave you that without price, which no price could buy : and it is for you to impart gratuitously, what ye have gratuitously received.

With this, the literal translation of the passage, we have at present no concern ; but with the spirit of the passage we have universal concern. It is the argument which pervades the Gospel. It is the argument by which our Lord requires of every Christian the forgiveness of injuries : “ I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me ; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ? ” It is the argument by which St. John enforces brotherly love : “ Brethren, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” It is the argument by which St. Paul exhorts us to the service of Christ, that they who were dead, and live through him, “ should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.” All these passages come to the same point, and imply the same duty—*Freely ye have received, freely give.* And it is an argument which ought to strike closely home to every christian soul.

You have enjoyed the testimony of the love of God : you have been offered the covenant of everlasting life : you have not been appointed unto wrath, “ but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” by the peculiar, unsought, unmerited favour of God toward you. *Freely ye have received* ; and his will is, that you should communicate your blessings, as far as your power extends, no less *freely* than you have *received* them. This is the universal demand of Scripture, with regard to every blessing which one man may enjoy more abundantly than his neighbour.

Now it is plain that the force of this argument, as a constraining motive, will depend upon our sense of the obligation conferred upon us.

In proportion as we feel the value of the Gospel, the Gospel written and in our hands, the Gospel preached and enforced upon our hearts, the Gospel pure and unadulterated, which in this country beyond all others we enjoy ; in that proportion we shall feel the corresponding duty of freely dispensing such peculiar blessings. But this feeling of obligation is apt to become very dormant in our minds. We talk of the Gospel, without always remembering what that term implies. We speak of Christendom : and in the geographical, forget the spiritual distinction. We lament the delusions

of Mahommedanism, we regret the superstitions of Paganism; as we lament the despotism of one country, or the anarchy of another: but where is that sense of a state of spiritual death, of enmity against God, of captivity to Satan, which universally pervades the Scriptures? Where is the conviction of the personal importance of faith in Christ Jesus to every individual under heaven? Scriptural views on this point, my christian brethren, would do more than a thousand arguments, to silence frivolous objections and restrain petty opposition. If the question only concerns a neighbour's trifling advantage or unessential comfort, then we may reasonably be slow to interpose our assistance or our counsel; but if his condition is desperate, if the case is a crisis of life or death, then delay is cruel, and neglect inhuman.

But I am aware, that, on this occasion,¹ I have little concern with objectors or opponents. It is not probable that any should be present here, who are not as much convinced of the importance of the Gospel to every soul of man, as he who addresses you. And I find comfort in the thought; for it is difficult to **CONTEND**, even in a christian cause, without feelings less pure and calm and

¹ The anniversary of the Church Missionary Society.

spiritual than befit this sacred place and sacred office.

I conceive, then, that the object of our present meeting is, not to create a feeling, but to cherish and invigorate it; to feed the flame which burns too feebly; to trim the lamp which is nigh to be extinguished by the damp and chilling spirit of the surrounding world. Mindful of this, we “do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” but desire by every means “to provoke one another to love and to good works.” May we never forget that the Spirit, which alone can kindle this flame effectually, must descend from heaven!

I. I have said, that our zeal for the propagation of the Gospel will, in a great measure, depend upon our sense of its value to ourselves, and its importance to others. Now, the fact seems often to be overlooked, but can never be openly denied, that the importance of the Gospel to heathen nations now, is the same as its importance to those who were heathens in the apostolical age. Paganism may vary in the objects of its errors or its superstitions, but it must always be essentially the same—the same in nature and in character. Ignorance of the true God, ignorance of his holy

attributes, ignorance of his heavenly kingdom, ignorance of the way of access to him—are evils which admit of no modification ; and did not oppress more heavily the nations which the apostles were commissioned to enlighten, than they oppress the nations which are in darkness at this day. If, then, we attempt at all to measure the value of the Gospel, or, rather—since it is vain to speak of estimating what is beyond all price, of measuring what is infinite—if we desire to elevate our conception to the height of so vast an argument, we must refer to the standard of the apostles, or of him who inspired their hearts and gave them their commission. We must judge as they judged—feel as they felt ; and so we shall be more inclined to follow their example, and act as they acted.

And two things particularly occur to me, as capable of raising our feelings towards a juster sense of the importance of the Gospel :

First, Our Lord's Commission to his apostles ;

Secondly, The labours and sacrifices undergone by the apostles, in executing his Commission.

1. “ Behold,” said our Lord, “ I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men ; for they will deliver you up to the councils,

and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for my sake. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake." ²

Such was the treatment which Jesus exhorted his apostles to encounter, and which he forewarned them to expect.

Now, the disposition which most especially distinguishes our Lord's character, as recorded in his history, is a disposition of tenderness and compassion. The great object which brought him into the world, did not so entirely occupy and engross his thoughts, as to make him insensible to the temporal wants and earthly sufferings of men; did not lead him to neglect their bodily diseases, or think lightly of their sorrows. Few of the miracles which attended his divinity were anything else than acts of mercy. He "went about doing good." He refused to satisfy his own hunger in the wilderness by the exercise of miraculous power; but when he was surrounded by a multitude, who, if he had sent them away fasting, would

² Matt. v. 16—18, 21, 22.

have fainted by the way, he “ had compassion on them,” and supplied their wants.³ When he saw the poor widow at Nain, whose only son, the remaining stay of her life and hopes, was carried out to burial, he pitied her ; and, restoring the young man to life, he delivered him to his mother.⁴ Again, when Lazarus was dead, and he was an eye-witness of the sorrows of the sisters, Martha and Mary ; though he knew within himself how short a space of time would turn that sorrow into joy, when they should receive their brother raised again from the tomb ; yet, when he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, “ he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled :” nay, he even wept himself, in sympathy with their affliction.⁵

If such was the tenderness of heart which Jesus uniformly displayed, we may justly believe that he would not have sent forth his disciples, those who had “ continued with him in his temptations,” those whom “ he loved to the end ;” he would not have urged them to give up all their connexions, and all their comforts, to expose themselves to reproach and persecution, to a painful prison or a torturing death, unless the object which he sent them to accomplish was of paramount importance,

³ Mark viii. 3.⁴ Luke vii. 11.⁵ John xi. 33—35.

and could be attained in no other way. Unless the state of those, to whom the apostles went preaching repentance and remission of sins, had been truly grievous—a state to which no earthly destitution, no earthly suffering, is worthy to be compared—he would not, to deliver them from it, have exposed his followers to a life of unexampled distress and labour. He would have allowed the heathen to remain in their ignorance, till the progress of knowledge and civilization, and the gradual diffusion of truth by other methods, instead of Missionary Preaching, might introduce a gleam of light amongst them, and relieve the children of some future day from the palpable delusions in which their fathers had lived and died. In a word, he would have done that which we are sometimes recommended, and sometimes disposed, to do. But he regarded the state of the heathen differently; and can we dare to believe that he did not regard it truly? He who, knowing all things beforehand, knew what his apostles would undergo; and who was not without experience of human sorrows, having himself drunk deep of the cup of suffering—he who had the greatest compassion for human misery, inasmuch as he went about relieving it, and even wept over it—did, nevertheless, commission those whom he best loved to

labour day and night, to encounter persecution, contumely, and death itself, that they might turn men from their idolatrous “vanities, to serve the living God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent.”

Here, then, let us sit at Jesus’ feet, and learn the importance of what the heathen still want, but which we have *freely received*.

2. I would observe, secondly, that our Lord’s representation of these things had so much effect upon those who most frequently heard them, and were assured of them from his own lips, that they did actually set out to meet the evils which he had foretold to them, and did actually resign whatever was dear to them on earth, for the sake of carrying far and wide the message of the Gospel.

It cannot but make a strong impression upon our minds, to reflect on this; to consider that men of like passions and feelings, men sensible of the same joys and sorrows, the same wants and cares and fears as ourselves, did, notwithstanding, give up all that human nature most delights in, and submit to all that human nature most abhors and shudders at, rather than leave their fellow-creatures in the ignorance to which they had been bred up, and the wickedness which grew out of it. We know, from the history of their proceedings, what

exertions they made, and what trials they underwent. And for what purpose?—That the Jews might no longer “go about to establish their own righteousness, but submit themselves to the righteousness of God”⁶—that the Greeks might not persist in the ignorant worship of a God unknown, but confess him in whom we live and move and have our being; and that all men might learn that “God had appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he had ordained;”⁷—that there is salvation in no other;⁸ that, “he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;” and that “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”⁹

Tell me, then, brethren, what consideration can restrain our feelings, or circumscribe our exertions, which might not equally have influenced the apostles? Have we to do with the votaries of a law, burthensome indeed to those who observe it, but no way injurious to their neighbours? Such, too, was the Jewish law; a yoke not easily borne, but perfectly inoffensive to all who did not bear it. Do we speak of an elegant Mythology, unsatisfactory indeed to our reason, but pleasing to

⁶ Rom. x. 3.

⁷ Acts xvii. 28—31.

⁸ Acts iv. 12.

⁹ 1 John v. 11, 12.

our imagination, and fit for the dreams of poetry ? Such was that of the Greeks ; which, however, so “ stirred the spirit of Paul within him,” that he could not remain silent, but “ disputed in the market daily with them that met with him.”¹ Or do we speak of fables which men have received from their ancestors, the errors in which they have been educated, and which they maintain, not in despite of better things, but in default of them, through inevitable ignorance ? Such is all Paganism ; yet the apostles considered it as bondage under the power of Satan, and saw in it the images of darkness and of death. This, in their view, was the condition of the heathen, compared with their own condition as “ children of God,” and “ joint heirs with Christ” of the eternal inheritance purchased by his blood for all who believe in him.

It was this view of the misery of heathenism, and of the blessings of Revelation, which led the apostles—led those (we should remember) who were best able to appreciate both—to overcome the strongest feelings of the heart ; which induced them to abandon all that men most naturally and justly love—their parents, their kindred, their country ; which could steel them against the reproaches of those dearest to them ; which could

¹ Acts xvii. 16, 17.

make them persevere in labours, exult in disgrace, and endure the fiery trial of death and torture—not through obstinacy, not through any barbarous hardihood of frame which defies suffering; but from a sober and holy calculation of the importance of the object for which all this was undergone; from a firm assurance that their own present afflictions bore no proportion to the infinite gain of those who should receive eternal life through their means and agency. I know (says St. Paul) “that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”²

Here, again, brethren, let us contemplate the value of what we have *freely received*. We have freely received what it was worth the labours, the sacrifices, the sufferings of the apostles to convey to the heathen of their day; whose situation was only what ours would have been, if God had not “made us to differ” by the more happy allotment of our birth and education. In these labours, in these sacrifices, in this school of mortification and

² Acts xx. 23, 24.

self-denial, let us learn the blessing of being called to the knowledge of God through the Gospel of his incarnate Son. The unbeliever may dispute and cavil ; but the Christian must bow to the authority of Christ, and defer to the example of the apostles. For, surely, the soul is no less precious now, than eighteen hundred years ago ; nor is eternity less awful. Heaven is not bereft of its glories, nor is there less terror in “ the blackness of darkness for ever.” No ! these are not changed. Eternity is still a profound abyss, which our imagination cannot fathom. The soul is still imperishable ; and God is still the same ; and Christ is still the same—the way, and the truth, and the life, by whom alone man has access to the Father. The difference is in us. We have a low and unworthy sense of blessings which we have always enjoyed : we do not justly estimate the value of our high calling. No man, indeed, ever did justly estimate it, or ever will, on this side the grave. Even the apostle failed of words to express “ the unsearchable riches of Christ ;” and was content, in the simplicity of his gratitude, to bless God for his unspeakable gift.³ But HE will go nearest to the thankfulness demanded of him, who goes nearest to the apostles in his imitation of their labours

³ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

in the christian cause ; who, in considering the case of half a world benighted, admits but the single thought, how he may himself assist toward enlightening that darkness—what portion of his leisure, of his abilities, of his wealth, he may be expected to employ, in promoting the divine plan for the redemption of mankind. He is not invited to join in rash or undigested measures, which defeat their own purpose : he is not required to follow ill-directed zeal, or to rush into action without knowledge and inquiry : but he is exhorted to beware of the devices of Satan, who will not readily abandon his strongholds ; and who would constantly persuade us to mistake indifference for prudence, and inactivity for discretion. Let him devise his measures with the wisdom of the serpent ; let him execute them with the meekness of the dove : but let him not hesitate to devise, nor delay to execute ; for, in the mean while, time is hastening, immortal beings are perishing, and he is “ guilty concerning his brethren”—guilty, by his neglect of that plain and reasonable command, *Freely ye have received, freely give*. Alas ! who can contemplate this—who can call to mind our obligations as a people, and our obligations as individuals, and our too long insensibility to those obligations—without praying, from the bottom of his

heart, "Remember not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities of our forefathers!"

II. Having thus attempted to bring your thoughts, as well as my own, to a more just appreciation of the benefits conferred upon us, it is time that I should proceed, in the second place, to the duty resulting from our privileges; and implied in the words, *Freely give*. For it is evident that all are not called to the same exercise of duty in this respect. "Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart," and according as he is enabled by his circumstances.

1. To some I would say, *Freely give* your MONEY, your INFLUENCE, your ABILITIES.

With regard to money, let me observe, that it is a gift within the power of those to whom no other gift is practicable; and that it has become indispensable, from the time that the Head of the Church has ceased visibly to interfere in the extension of his kingdom upon earth. Charities, we know, even religious charities, like every other expenditure, must be directed by calculation, and not by enthusiasm. But we all are bound to inquire what proportion our contributions have borne to the importance of their object; all to consider whether no part of our expenditure would be em-

ployed in a manner more pleasing to God, and more profitable to men, if it were devoted to the cause of true religion.

But our cause stands in need of INFLUENCE and of ABILITIES, no less than of pecuniary aid. The affairs of an empire demand talents of a different sort, but scarcely demand higher talents than the concerns of a Missionary Society. Knowledge of mankind, discrimination of individual character, observation of “the signs of the times,” quickness in profiting by circumstances, prudence united with zeal, and activity tempered by moderation—these are but a sample of the qualifications which are required in the direction of Missionary operations. It is with a Society of this sort, as with an individual; his conduct is estimated according to his profession: and we know that conduct unsuitable to profession is rather a matter of exultation, than of regret to the enemies of religion. Now, in what way can abilities be more delightfully engaged, than in promoting, by advice, by influence, by active co-operation, the extension of the church of God? The present age has this peculiar characteristic, that no man need “stand all the day idle.” There have been times when many might, comparatively, have sought in vain for an opportunity of employing their talents in the service of

religion : but, now, every species of ability may be turned to spiritual usefulness, and may co-operate in the noble purpose of reconciling man to God. Let the linguist unfold in new tongues the mystery of Redemption : let the learned bring the experience of former times to assist present exertions : let the eloquent stimulate the tardy, and rouse the indifferent : let the logical reasoner silence calumny, and detect misrepresentation. All have their use : and, by such use, all are sanctified ; and the daily business of life becomes a daily preparation for heaven. When we compare this mode of employing talents, and the gratification which attends it, with the way in which they are sometimes neglected and sometimes misused by men of leisure and independence, how truly do we mark the reward that follows godliness, even in the life that now is ! Far be it from me to recommend a self-complacent retrospect of our own doings : indeed, who, that could indulge in such self-complacency, would be found to take an interest in the religion of a meek and lowly Saviour ? But, for a Christian to rejoice that he has been led by the Spirit of God to devote the faculties bestowed on him to the service of the Giver, is according to the apostle's own example—
“ I have fought a good fight : I have finished my

course : I have kept the faith.”⁴ Nay, it has even a higher sanction in the words—“ Father, I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”⁵

My brethren, a time may come, when such an evidence of faith working by love will be valuable to your hearts. Lay up for yourselves a consolatory reflection against the day of trial.

2. I come now to a sacrifice confessedly more difficult : but there are those to whom it may be proper to say, *Freely give* your FRIENDS and RELATIONS to the furtherance of this holy cause.

A blameable reluctance on the part of near relations to spare those who are dear to them, is one of the greatest obstacles to the increase of the Missionary Spirit among us. It is humbling to reflect, that opportunities of secular advantage, which equally separate a man from his friends and his country, are sought with eagerness and welcomed with congratulation ; but with what comparative coldness, to say the least, if not with evident regret, do we hear of a young friend's determination to become an ambassador of Christ among the heathen ! The impediment to the Missionary cause is to be found here. Here is the

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

⁵ John xvii. 4.

reason why our labourers are crying out, from the east and from the west, and often, alas ! in vain, “ Come over and help us.” There is talent enough in our land, for this as well as other objects ; there is enterprise enough : and God would not withhold the spirit of piety, which would rejoice to spend itself in making known the blessings of redemption. The fault lies heavily upon parents and relations, who, instead of bending youthful talents into this direction, too often divert the ardour of enterprise into very different channels, and extinguish feelings which burn with a desire to promote the glory of God and the salvation of mankind.

But, you may reply, “ The sacrifice is greater than we can bear. That very disposition, which inclines our son to the work of a missionary, is the disposition which endears him to his family at home. Those talents, which we have watched and cultivated, we hoped to see expand into usefulness, and reward our pains. We have reared the plant, and are not allowed to witness its perfection : we have nursed the bud, and the blossom is taken from us, to disclose its beauty to others—to others, probably, who will not recognise its value, but cast it from them and trample it under foot.”

These feelings are very natural ; but they are not, on that account, to be encouraged. We must resist them (it is the only way in which they can be successfully resisted) on our knees ;—praying, “ Lord, increase our faith ”—our faith in those heavenly promises, which are intended to reconcile us to the loss of what we here resign in duty to thee ! Where is now the faith of Abraham, when he, who had received the promises offered up his only son ? ⁶ Where is the gratitude of Hannah, when she said, I have lent my child unto the Lord : as long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the Lord ? ⁷

I grant the sacrifice is great, when the child, or the brother, or the friend who is dearer than a brother, goes forth to encounter the vicissitudes of climate, the risks of foreign travel, the enmity of hardened sinners, the scorn and contumely of infidels, perhaps even the injuries of those whom he desires to bless. But so was the sacrifice great, when the apostles left all and followed him who was despised and rejected of men : and he allowed it to be great, when he pronounced his solemn blessing upon those who had done this, and upon all who should hereafter do it, following their example.⁸ If we give unto the Lord that which costs

⁶ Heb. xi. 17. ⁷ 1 Sam. i. 28. ⁸ See Luke xviii. 29, 30.

us nothing, “ what do we more than others ?” “ He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.” In truth, it is something like hypocrisy, to lament over the pitiable case of the heathen, and to desire that “ the knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth,” and to “ pray the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth labourers into his harvest ;” and then to grudge those labourers, if they are taken from among ourselves ; to withhold the instruments by which the blessing must of necessity be conveyed. But let us hope better things, though we thus speak. Let us hope that the examples, which have been already seen, of truly disinterested sacrifices, of the renunciation of this world’s best endearments for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, may be an earnest of a glorious season now beginning, when great shall be the company of those who publish the word of the Lord.⁹

3. Proceeding to enforce the principle of the text, I may say to others, *Freely give* YOURSELVES, your LIVES—some may be present here to whom such an exhortation will not be improperly addressed—*Freely give* your LIVES—to the honour-

⁹ See Psalm lxxviii. 11.

able work of an evangelist. Yet I am too mindful of the weakness of our nature, and of what the cause requires, to wish this work undertaken by any one rashly or unadvisedly. Sit down first, and "count the cost." Consider the dangers, the difficulties, the sacrifices: but do not consider these alone: have respect, also, to the magnitude of the object, and to "the recompense of the reward." In full and unhesitating faith, contemplate the assurance of our blessed Lord, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man who hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."¹

For my own part, I will confess, that as far as I have pursued that instructive study, the biography of missionaries, I have been particularly struck with the fulfilment of the paradoxical promise, "manifold more in this present time." I have generally seen, that as many as have entered their names in the glorious book of "apostles and prophets and evangelists,"² have taken upon themselves a laborious, a toilsome, a painful profession; but no man's consolations have been like theirs. They have wandered through a wilderness of moral

¹ Luke xviii. 29, 30.

² Eph. iv. 11.

misery ; but their path has been guided and cheered ; they have not been left without the pillar of cloud to screen them by day, or the pillar of fire to enliven the darkness of the night. The delightful intercourse of earthly friends has been denied them ; but they have enjoyed the presence of God : he has “ come unto them, and made his abode with them.” They have borne the burthen and heat of the day ; but they have realised the promise, that “ as their days, so should their strength be.” In the midst of their usefulness, death has intercepted their labours : but their hope has been “ full of immortality.” Beyond that of others, the missionary’s “ conversation is in heaven.” His employment in his Redeemer’s service keeps him in perpetual intercourse with his Redeemer. His difficulties and his necessities maintain within him a salutary feeling of dependence. Good or ill success equally draws him closer to God. He is encumbered less than most men with those earthly cares, which press down the soul and chain it to things present. The world is truly crucified unto him, and he unto the world. And although, in the approach towards this state, there will be many a painful struggle of the flesh against the spirit ; yet when, by the grace of God, it is attained, it is its own exceeding great reward : for

it has with it "that peace of God which passeth all understanding," which this world can neither give nor take away.

4. One offering remains, to which I may invite you with still greater urgency, because it is an offering undoubtedly within the power of all. Some may have neither fortune, nor influence, nor friends, nor talents to contribute; but all may *freely give* their PRAYERS toward the conversion of the heathen. And, without prayer, what spiritual good would be achieved, by the highest authority, or the most splendid abilities, or the most lavish contributions? Prayer must draw down that heavenly increase, without which even Paul would have planted and Apollos have watered in vain. Prayer gave the apostles their success; and they, in return, demanded the prayers of their converts, that God would "open to them a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ."³ The object MUST be a holy object, which is prosecuted by prayer: other measures may originate in a spirit of party, or in secular enterprise; but "fervent effectual prayer" will only be excited by the desire of the salvation of our fellow-creatures. Other means, too, are of doubtful result; but, of

³ Col. iv. 3.

prayer, we confidently trust that it will not altogether fail : and the recent annals of missions warrant the belief, that God is still pleased to be distinguished as one who hears and answers prayer. A light, still dim, indeed, and feeble, yet a light now gleams upon the heathen lands, more visibly than in any former time. And in no former time have such earnest supplications been raised toward the throne of grace, from so many domestic altars, and so many christian hearts, imploring that the lives of those good men who have gone forth may not have been spent in vain.

In conclusion, brethren—This discourse will have answered its purpose, if it shall lead any one among you to inquire what he has individually done toward freely imparting that which he has freely received ; whether he has contributed as much toward establishing his Redeemer's kingdom, as, in his particular circumstances, he was bound to contribute. No doubt there are those among us, who would in vain disclaim this evidence of their faith : for their “ praise is in all the churches.” But there must also be others, conscious to themselves that their exertions in the cause have been not only unworthy of the object, (for of such an object what exertions can be worthy?) but un-

worthy of their own acknowledged duty and profession. O reflect, my brethren, how guilty this indifference must needs appear in the sight of the Son of God! He did not think it much to leave the bosom of the Father, with whom he was before all worlds: he did not think it much to take upon him the infirmities and sufferings of man; he did not think it much to feel the exquisite sense of sin, though without its guilt, and to undergo its direct penalty: and can there be such apathy in men, that they should deny him the glories of a triumph so hardly achieved, and grudge him the fruits of his victory? Every soul taken from the power of Satan is a jewel added to his crown; and every soul which Satan still retains through our neglect or delay, is a jewel withheld from his reward. As far, then, as depends on you, let him “see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” Let him behold you, from his throne on high, contemplating his unspeakable love, till some portion of it kindles in your own bosom. Let him behold you meditating on your own reconciliation with God through “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” till you are filled with a desire to carry forth the olive-branch of peace to those who are still at enmity with him, still aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Let him behold you co-operating with his

mysterious plan for the redemption of the world. He has left it to your co-operation. He has deigned to make you his instruments. He has paid down the ransom ; and has commanded you to go forth and publish the glad tidings. Follow the example which he has set up for your admiration. Though his attributes were infinite, he employed them all in love to man ; his omniscience to warn ; his mercy to invite ; his power to convince ; his manhood to minister ; his Godhead to redeem ! And, now, he calls on you to devote your faculties to his service, or rather to the service of your fellow-creatures for his sake. He expects you to give this proof, that the mercies bestowed on you have not been bestowed unworthily. The time is short to any of us, during which such proofs can possibly be given. Provide wisely against that hour, when one token that we have been united to the Saviour, in true and lively faith, will be more dear to our recollection, and more soothing to our hearts, than the praises, or the treasures, or the glories of a thousand transitory worlds.

SERMON XVII.

REASONS FOR MISSIONARY EXERTIONS.

Matt. vi. 10.

Thy kingdom come.

THE kingdom of God, here alluded to, is the kingdom established in the world by Christ Jesus, and created upon the ruins of the kingdom of Satan. "For this was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;" that he might cast out "the prince of darkness," who had been too long "the prince of this world." He was to be the head of a kingdom, in which the sovereignty of God should be owned; the name of God hallowed; the will of God done.

And in making a petition that this kingdom may come, a part of that prayer which has been left for our constant use, our blessed Lord has

interested his disciples, to the end of time, in the promulgation of his Gospel. *Thy kingdom come!* I cannot use these words with any reasonable meaning, unless I desire that the grace of God may reign, first, in my own heart, and “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ;” next, that it may govern my family, my relations, my dependents, all, in short, with whom I am concerned: and, further, that the knowledge of God may be extended more and more widely upon earth, till the darkness is dispersed and the true light shineth everywhere, and “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”¹

Such, as far as it regards this present world, is the force of the familiar petition, *Thy kingdom come!* We pray that the number be increased of willing and obedient hearts, who serve their heavenly Lord, and acknowledge their eternal King. So that all hearts may be his; and his sovereignty may be as universal as his right is indisputable;—till his will is “done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

I proceed to consider why we should be taught to make this the subject of our constant prayer; what ought to be in our minds, that the words of

¹ Rev. xi. 13.

our mouths, and the desires of our hearts, may ascend to God together.

It would be a sufficient reason, that God might be glorified by his creatures. This every servant of God will earnestly desire. The thought is shocking, that man, who cannot lift up an arm, except as God gives strength—man, who cannot utter a breath except through him “in whom he lives and moves,” should yet defy his Maker’s will, and live in habitual transgression of his laws.

Not, however, without that consequence by which God has ordained that disobedience to his laws should even here be visited. And therefore we pray that the kingdom of God may come, first, because of the wretchedness which prevails where his kingdom is not established.

I. I would not be understood to say, that in a heathen country there is nothing except wretchedness. That would be as unreasonable as to pretend that in a christian country all were happiness. There is no land where God has “left himself without witness,” and has not bestowed many blessings of which even the wickedness of man cannot entirely deprive him. Heathen lands

are compared in Scripture to a wilderness. Yet in a wilderness, among the general barrenness, some fruitful spots are found, and some flowers which, though without culture, and without valuable fruit, delight the eye, and relieve the wearied mind of the traveller who passes through.

But in heathen lands there is a vast proportion of misery ; of that worst misery, which arises from men's wickedness. St. Paul has left descriptions which are still, alas ! but too accurate ; declaring how “ the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart ; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity.”²

We know the distress which a single character of this kind is able to inflict upon others ; we know how he is dreaded in his family, and abhorred in his neighbourhood. What then must we think, when a country is filled with such characters !

But it may be asked, have the heathen no reli-

² Rom. i.

gion? Is there nothing to correct the evil of their nature? My brethren, the very religion of the heathen is their misery; and to deliver them from this, is one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed on them. What we call their religion, is commonly as cruel and as sensual as their own bad passions, and goes far towards exciting and inflaming those passions. They have "received by tradition from their fathers" what we may truly call "a vain conversation;" and according to that vain conversation their priests instruct them, sometimes to torment themselves, and sometimes to torment others; to consider cruelty as obedience, and anguish piety. Pompous ceremonies, vain repetitions, disgusting and barbarous rites, we may find amongst them; but where shall we find that which is really pleasing to the Almighty? The doing of justice? The loving mercy? The walking humbly with God? Heathenism knows not this. Fallen, sinful man, discovers it not: his heart is at enmity with justice, at enmity with mercy, at enmity with humility, till it is renewed by the Spirit of God, and instructed by his word. He will do those things which are agreeable to the pride of his nature, or which pamper the corrupt desires of his nature, or which accord with the cruelty of his nature; but his religion neither

teaches him nor enables him to oppose these evil dispositions, and to become “poor in spirit,” and “pure in heart,” and “meek and merciful.” “The light that is in him is darkness ;” and truly we may say, “how great is that darkness !”

Almighty Father, may *thy kingdom come* ! that the people which walk in such darkness may see thy marvellous light, and thy glory may rise upon them !

II. Heathenism, then, is misery. But the Gospel, on the other hand, is in itself a mighty blessing.

I need hardly urge this truth before those who possess the Gospel, who have just now united in thanking God, above all other mercies, “for the means of grace and hope of glory.” But perhaps this very possession of the blessing makes us less capable of appreciating its value. We have never felt the perplexity of searching after the Creator of the world, “if haply we might find him,” through the clouds and darkness which surround his throne. We have never thought of him as the object alone of undefinable dread ; we have never learnt to hear his anger in storms and tempests ; to tremble at him as the avenger, to worship him as the destroyer. God has been revealed to

us, from our youth up, not in the terrors which superstition invents, or with which ignorance torments itself: he has been revealed to us not even in the fire, and blackness, and tempests of Mount Sinai, which the Israelites could not endure.³ He has been revealed to us in the still small voice of mercy. The heathen have been used to regard that being which they have adored as God, as cruel and revengeful; as pleased with pain and delighting in blood. But we acquaint them with God as “long-suffering and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin:” who promises to the penitent offender, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” We acquaint them with him, whose harshest words are, “Why will ye die, O house of Israel, why will ye be stricken any more?” “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.” “Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Such is the gracious language of the Gospel: and

³ Heb. xiii. 18.

need I ask whether it is a blessing ? But, further, it not only offers peace, but brings a pledge of it. The God whom we make known to the heathen, is he who “ so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that all who believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” So loved the world, that when that world had destroyed itself through sin, he contrived, and prepared, and fulfilled a plan of mercy, which should bring men back from ruin, and restore them to happiness, by restoring them to the knowledge and love and service of their Creator. That punishment which sin incurred, that sacrifice which sin demanded, he could not forego : his holiness, his justice, enforced the penalty ; nay, the world (in order that it might be recovered from its carnality and unbelief) required a proof, a standing, undeniable proof, of the consequences of unrepented wickedness. But that proof he has given, not in the destruction, but in the salvation of his creatures : that truth he has made manifest, not by a proclamation of wrath, but of mercy ; not by a message of terror, but of peace ; and the language of his ministers is, “ We are ambassadors for God, and beseech you, for Christ’s sake, be ye reconciled unto God : ” “ God hath not appointed you unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He

has laid on him the iniquity of us all, and implores you to receive eternal life as his free gift to all that repent and believe in that name.

Such, brethren, is the message of the Gospel ; such is the message which Christ delighted to bring, and angels to hear, and the apostles to convey ; these are the gracious terms in which God makes himself known to his erring sinful creatures, and such is the pledge and covenant which he has afforded of his love. I may feel ashamed of labouring to prove that this revelation is a mighty blessing to mankind. I trust that the hearts of many here present respond to me when I affirm it, because you know and feel it to be so. You know that it is a blessing to yourselves. You feel that it is justly described as “ righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” You feel it to be righteousness, because, through its strength, and its sanctions, and its promises, you are enabled to put off the “ old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” You feel it to be peace, because you “ know in whom you have believed : and that he is able to keep what you have committed to him unto the great day.” You feel it to be joy, because you walk in the comfort of the

Holy Ghost ; and “ though now, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” yet you can look forward to the end, and anticipating the time “ when Christ, who is your life, shall appear,” you can smile through your present tears, and rejoice “ with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Almighty Father! *thy kingdom come!* when “ all shall know thee, from the least to the greatest ;” and thou shalt be “ to them a God, and they shall be to thee a people !”

III. But, further, we desire that the Gospel may be carried into all lands, because it leads to unspeakable blessings hereafter. We cannot indeed describe those blessings ; we cannot even imagine them within our minds ; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. We cannot open the windows of heaven, and display before your eyes what St. John was permitted to contemplate, the holy city, with its “ gates of pearl, and its streets of pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”⁴ Still less can we show you the kingdom “ wherein dwelleth righteousness,”⁵ and only righteousness ; into

⁴ Rev. xxi. 21.

⁵ 2 Pet. iii. 15.

which “there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.”⁶ Alas! how should eyes which are soiled with the pollutions of this corrupt world, behold the realms where all is holiness and purity: which “the glory of God doth lighten, and the Lamb is the light thereof?”

But there are considerations by which we can assure ourselves of the reality of this blessedness, and the greatness of this glory: even if we are unable to fill our imagination with its nature, there are means by which we can satisfy our reason of its inestimable value.

The kingdom which the Gospel opens to us, is a kingdom which God from the beginning of the world has prepared for the righteous. It is the kingdom promised to Adam, revealed to Abraham, shadowed out under the law, foretold by the prophets, anticipated by faithful men through long ages of expectation, and waited for in a patient course of obedience and endurance. It is a kingdom, whose nearer approach was welcomed by the heavenly host in hymns and congratulations; and the things concerning which “angels desire to look into.” It is the kingdom perfected by that wonderful mystery of godliness, God manifest in

⁶ Rev. xxii. 15.

the flesh ; the kingdom purchased by his precious blood. Great, indeed, must be the glory which is worth this astonishing sacrifice ; great the reality which is ushered in with this long and mighty preparation. It is a kingdom which those who have understood it best, because it had been most clearly revealed to them, have valued most ; for the sake of which they have resigned all that in this world is most delightful, and endured all that in this world is most fearful ; have forsaken the objects of their tenderest affection, houses and country, parents and children ; have “ consented to be tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection ;” have submitted to “ trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment ;” have learnt to “ joy in tribulations also,” to “ rejoice and be exceeding glad,” looking for a reward in heaven. This they have done, not having received the promises, but walking by faith, which has been to them the evidence of things not seen. And what must be the reality of that blessedness, the expectation of which could achieve such triumphs over the strongest feelings of our present nature ?

But before a christian congregation I have no more need to enlarge upon the happiness of hea-

ven, than upon the value of Gospel privileges. Let us rather pray, "Lord, increase our faith!" "Open the eyes of our understandings," that we may duly prize the heavenly inheritance, and so set our affections on things above, as to say with earnestness and sincerity, *Thy kingdom come!*

Let me now apply what has been said to the purpose of my present discourse.

Brethren, we owe this to Christianity; that the rule of doing unto others as we would they should do unto us, is called a golden rule, and become a proverb in our mouths. Now if you were in a miserable condition, you would desire that others who had the power, should deliver you from your low estate. I have shown that heathenism is misery. Let us then exert ourselves to relieve the heathen from that condition.

If another were possessed of a treasure which, without impoverishing himself, nay, enriching himself the more, he might freely impart to you, you would desire, and justly desire, a share of it. I have shown that the Gospel is a treasure: a blessing great in its immediate benefits, and incalculably great in its future promises. Let us exert ourselves to communicate that blessing, and spread it more widely over the world.

How can we do this? you might possibly be obliged to ask : what means are within our power to effect so great a work ?

Such might be the inquiry, if I did not address you on behalf of a Society which performs this very object.⁷ It is an apparatus, set in motion by the love of God and man, and contrived for the purpose of conveying, in the most effectual manner, the blessings of the Gospel into the wilderness of heathenism. It considers ignorance of God, and of the way of access to him, as the greatest misfortune ; and therefore it applies itself to relieve that misfortune. It considers knowledge of God, and of the means of adoption into his favour through Christ Jesus, as the greatest blessing : and therefore bestirs itself to communicate that blessing. If there be a part of our globe where ignorance is dense, and reason degraded, it is Africa. And to Africa particularly have the efforts of this Society been directed. If there be a country where religion is truly misery, and light darkness, and superstition devilish, it is India, the wide expanse of our Eastern territories ; and there, too, has this Society found openings for christian adventure, and assisted to exhibit the standard of the cross, that whoever will, may “ look up and be saved.”

⁷ The Church Missionary Society.

Do you ask why it has done this? Because it saw the nations naked and bleeding, and it could not pass by on the other side. Do you ask why it has done this? Because it is composed of Christians; and as Christ, when he beheld the world in ruins, not only pitied, but relieved its wretchedness; so they also would be ashamed to name the name of Christ, and not to follow his steps in the active exercise of mercy. Do you ask further, why it has done this? Because it is composed of churchmen; and, as members of the church, they are in the daily habit of praying, *Thy kingdom come!* and they know that to pray for a blessing, and not to use the means which may procure it, is either vain enthusiasm or sinful hypocrisy. Shall we constantly repeat the supplication, that God would make “his way known upon earth, his saving health unto all nations,” and shall we contribute no share towards that blessed consummation? To extend the knowledge of his way, to impart to the perishing his saving health, by sending messengers to convey it, is the express design of this Society; and in so doing, it facilitates the efforts, even the smallest efforts, of spiritual benevolence, and gives effect to the feebleness of individual exertions.

Again, we admire the constitution of our church,

we admire its services, and think them happily adapted to the wants and circumstances of mankind. Then shall we not extend the use of them? Ought we not in consistency to communicate what we approve? Ought we not to enable others in the same words to raise their supplications to the same God; to implore his mercy in the same humble confessions; and to praise his goodness in the same joyful thanksgivings? This very Sabbath, brethren, many a congregation, in many a remote land, is lifting up holy hands to God; many a congregation which, but for this Society, would have been doubting what ought to be adored, or perhaps would have been adoring the evil one. This very Sabbath, brethren, the confession of sinfulness, in which you have joined, has risen also from the parching sands of Africa, and from the luxuriant forests of India: and, taught by the instruments which this Society has employed, multitudes of converted heathen have imitated you in the words, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."⁸ As you have borrowed them from the songs of angels, the heathen have copied them from the formularies of your church. Have you assisted in this? Has your mite contributed to this blessed exchange of heathen igno-

⁸ Isa. vi. 3.

rance for christian worship ? Go on, and prosper. Never was there a time when your exertions were more needed. The Society has become impoverished by its own success ; and unless the liberality of its supporters keeps pace with that success, it will be forced to contract its operations, and relax its efforts in the christian cause. Is there one here who has not assisted hitherto, and taken no share in this work ? Hasten to wipe away the stain, before it is indelible ; and show, by some sacrifice on behalf of spiritual charity, that you prize what you enjoy, that you can act as well as pray, and diligently promote what you profess earnestly to desire.

SERMON XVIII.

ACTIVE CHARITY A PART OF PURE RELIGION.

James i. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

It is evident from the tone of St. James's epistle, that among those to whom he addressed it,¹ practical religion was at a low ebb. Perhaps this was more likely to be the case with the Jewish converts, than with those from among the heathen who had embraced the Gospel. The Jews had been accustomed to the name of religion. They had been used to associate with it the idea of forms and ceremonies. They had always considered themselves as the people of God. It was

¹ The twelve tribes which were scattered abroad.

no new thing to cry unto him, "Abba, Father." And for this reason, it would be more difficult to make them understand the different relation towards God in which they were placed, as disciples of his blessed Son; more difficult for them to perceive the devotedness of heart and life to which they were called through the Gospel; to perceive that names are nothing, unless they represent realities; that forms are not piety, but the means of piety.

On this account St. James takes great pains to show the danger of being "hearers of the word" only, and not "doers;" and so "deceiving their own selves" with the shadow instead of the substance of religion. He points out the effect which FAITH will have, when it is truly planted and rooted in the heart. And in the text he sets forth one example, one very important instance, of the way in which it will operate and direct the habits of life. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

Brethren, it well behoves us to consider what is *pure and undefiled religion*. How earnestly are we warned to consider this in time! How carefully does our Lord guard us against that self-

deceit in which Satan would desire to lull the heart ! How plainly does he declare, that “ Not every one that calleth him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven ! ”

Whilst, then, I lay before you the import of this text, may the Spirit of truth open your hearts to examine yourselves, and see that you are not “ barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. The apostle’s words prove, first, that something might appear to be, or be held to be, *pure and undefiled religion*, which is not satisfactory *before God*.

1. They prove, for instance, that a scriptural and orthodox creed is not in itself sufficient. To believe in God the Father ; to believe in Jesus Christ the Redeemer ; to believe in the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier ; to believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, is the foundation of all righteousness ; but it is only the foundation : and unless on that foundation the edifice of a christian life is raised—a life of piety towards God, of obedience towards Christ Jesus, of dependence on the Holy Spirit, of preparation for heaven—then is the foundation useless ; the

purpose is not answered for which it was laid. It is worse to begin to build, and not to be able to finish, than not to build at all. And it is better not to have known the truth, than to acknowledge doctrines which ought to lead to active love towards God and man, and to live as if we knew them not. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”² If we are acquainted with those truths which ought to guide our practice, and are not actuated by them;—with principles which ought to set our whole lives in motion, and are not moved by them—we may be judged out of our own mouths, and convicted by our own confusion.

2. An orthodox faith, therefore, is not *pure and undefiled religion*. Neither, it here appears, is an inactive, contemplative religion such as God approves. There is much to amuse the mind and captivate the fancy in this species of religion. Good men (we have no doubt they were good men) have been deceived by its fair form; and have persuaded themselves that the best method to become conversant with a heavenly world was to retire from this; and that they approached the

² Luke xii. 48.

life of angels in proportion as they departed from the life of men. Some have even dared to cast reproach upon what they have termed a busy religion ; and have recommended a silent piety, and a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine attributes and perfections.

Plainly, these would not agree with St. James, nor St. James with them. It is an active, busy thing to leave the retired chamber, and the pious books, and the devout meditation, and to seek out and instruct the fatherless, to visit and console the afflicted. Yet this, he assures us, is *pure and undefiled religion* ; because it is to this that meditation and prayer will lead, if they are attended by the Spirit of God : just as meditation on any object of affection, just as intercourse with those we love, will set us, not upon thinking of their excellencies, but upon doing what will please them. Certainly, without the religion of the closet, there can be no religion out of it : we must be prepared for active service by a prayerful study of the word in private. But one must not supersede the other ; and even private devotion will decay and languish, if the affections which it ought to excite are suffered to remain inert, instead of being strengthened and invigorated by action.

I have no doubt, for example, that the pious

band of religious teachers who deny themselves the rest and resign some of the privileges of the Lord's day, in order that they may instruct children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—I have no doubt that they have a return made to their own souls ; and that in this, as in all other things, God will allow no one to be loser for what is devoted to him.

II. It seemed needful thus briefly to hint at errors in this matter, for the purpose of showing more plainly what is *true and undefiled religion*.

It is, first, as we are here told, *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*.

One half of the world, as has sometimes been said, knows not how the other half lives. This will not be the case where there is *pure and undefiled religion*. There will be then a principle which will lead the one half to inquire into the condition of the other. And truly, brethren, there is much need. We may well be astonished, that in a country like ours, where there is so much knowledge, there should also be so much ignorance ; that where there is so much superabundant wealth, there should also be so much indigence and wretchedness. This could not be, if *pure and undefiled religion* were better understood, and more generally practised.

When St. James mentions *the widows and the fatherless*, he means, of course, the destitute and afflicted of every class. He specifies these only as most especially deserving our compassion. For what is the case of one left *fatherless*? The parent of a young family is taken away from those whom he tended by his care, and supported by his industry. To lose the object dearest to one on earth, is in itself a grievous thing. It is still more grievous when, with the father, the maintenance is lost also. And what too often follows? The education of the children, which had been begun, is stopped, because the expense can no longer be afforded, or because the fatherless child is compelled, at a premature age, to take the father's place, and earn his livelihood. This is a serious evil. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good;" and yet this soul must grow up without knowledge, for want of opportunity to attain it. But the case may be still worse. A family left in indigence is placed in a state of great temptation. There are many too ready to take advantage of such circumstances; many whose habits are corrupt and vicious, and whose interest perhaps it is that others should be corrupt and vicious too. Without counsel, without friendly attention, without that help which timely advice

and assistance might afford, how dangerous as well as desolate the case of *the fatherless and widow* !

And yet within a distance, we know not how short a distance, of this bereaved family, other families are living, to whom God has spared their parents, their wives, their husbands; and who have this world's good in plenty, if not in superfluity. Does it never occur to them to ask themselves, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which he has done unto me?" And what does the Lord require of them? He has showed them what is good in his sight, and has enjoined them to visit *the fatherless and widows in their affliction*.

Observe, brethren, to *visit*. The original word is more comprehensive than any one word of ours can fully render.³ It is to look round for and to inspect their circumstances: to see the assistance which they need, even as God himself did when he visited and redeemed his people, having seen and pitied their condition. So that none can justly suppose that they have answered the requirements of such charity, because when the fatherless and widow come to their door, and display their case, and prove their misery, they do not send them empty away. But this is not *visit-*

³ ἐπισκεπτεσθαι.

ing—not looking out for distress, in order to relieve it, before the case is irremediable. The first inroads of indigence should be checked, as much as the first inroads of disease. The habits of indigence are as inveterate, and as hard to cure, as a long neglected complaint. Both should be prevented, not overtaken ; prevented by that kindly care, of which the Gospel of Christ supplies the motive, and his commandment sets the rule.

Brethren, when this is done on regular plan and system, it gives to the community a christian aspect which it cannot otherwise assume. I may justly say a CHRISTIAN aspect, for “ by this,” said our Lord, “ shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one to another.”

But a certain degree of good may be accomplished, although the plan may not be general. I go into an uncultivated country, and I see before me a wide-spread field, far too extensive for my unassisted strength. But I do not on that account return to the place I have left, or sit down inactive. I apply my pains to an insulated spot, which first attracts my interest and invites my care. So in the wide field of that world in which their lot is cast, every one may select for themselves that particular sphere of usefulness to which in God's providence they are directed. If but one person

takes twenty families under his superintendence, a hundred individuals will be visited: if twenty persons are moved to the visitation of a like number, their care would extend over two thousand. And though a blessing would as certainly appear, as when a barren moorland is reclaimed by cultivation, the extent of the good imparted, and of the misery prevented, would never be known on this side the grave.

I am aware that, in such engagements, difficulty must be encountered; self-denial exercised, and perhaps rebukes and disappointments endured. But “none of these things move me;” for I must shut up my Bible, if I am to expect that all religious duty is to be made easy to me, or all the path towards heaven prove smooth and plain. And who that is affected by genuine love towards God or man, would not be amply recompensed for any of such trials, if but one fellow-creature be brought to the light of the Gospel who might otherwise have remained in darkness, or if one head be lifted out of the dust which might otherwise have been prostrated in despair?

III. I come now to the other characteristic of pure and undefiled religion—to *keep himself unspotted from the world.*

And there is a connexion between these two branches here placed by the apostle on the same stem. For it is commonly *the world*, in some form or other, which hinders the exercise of this *pure and undefiled religion*. The business of the world engrosses; its pleasures divert; or its sentiments deceive.

1. In regard to worldly business, I need not say that a man does not *keep himself unspotted from the world* by withdrawing from it. The cases must be few where this could be needful. Religion consists in “using the world, as not abusing it.” Our Lord’s prayer for his disciples was, “not that they should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil” of it.⁴ In truth, worldly business may be as salutary to the religious mind, as exercise is to the body. It may send a man back to spiritual things with a zest and appetite to enjoy them, made more lively by temporary change. But then business, as well as bodily exercise, may be protracted so long as to weary and not refresh. It may be carried to an extent which shall leave for other things neither time nor inclination. That man, therefore, will *keep himself unspotted from the world*, who limits and moderates

⁴ John xviii. 15.

his worldly business, and never allows it so to engross him as to exclude the "one thing needful." I grant that, if he so acts, he must incur some risks: temporal prospects may sometimes be endangered; others may pass by him in the race of wealth or honour, with whom he might have kept equal pace, if he had been equally devoted to this present world. But, brethren, "they have their reward." You need not grudge it them, if to enjoy it here they forfeit it for ever. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Remember, the religion you profess is a religion of self-denial; of present sacrifice for the sake of an "exceeding great reward," when this world, and all that is in the world, shall have passed away.

2. The pleasures and amusements of *the world* are still more injurious than the business of the world, to *pure and undefiled religion*. Many of them, either considered in themselves, or viewed in their consequences and effects, are opposed to it altogether. They involve a waste of that time and that money, which ought to be employed in the service of God and the welfare of mankind. So that the apostle does not scruple to say of one "that liveth in pleasure," that she "is dead whilst

she liveth :”⁵ one that lives in vain and luxurious dissipation is dead to God, dead to the proper purposes for which life is given. God has mercifully connected so much of real delight and true enjoyment with those duties which he has enjoined us to perform, that they bring their own return, and furnish their own refreshment. And to leave these pure gratifications for scenes of vanity, of frivolity, of wantonness, ought to be as distasteful to the Christian, as it was to St. Peter and his brethren to descend from the mount on which they had beheld their Lord in his divine glory, and to return to the plain below, and mingle again with sin and sorrows.⁶ It is not in such scenes, it is not when “the tabor and the pipe, the harp and the viol, and wine are in their feasts, that men regard the work of the Lord, or consider the operation of his hands.” And therefore it is part of pure and undefiled religion, that a man *keep himself unspotted from the world.*

3. For he is in danger, thirdly, from its sentiments as well as from its pleasures. Such sentiments, for instance, as I have just expressed, and such employments as I have been recommending,

⁵ 1 Tim. v. 5.

⁶ See Matt. xvii. 4.

would not be in accordance with the opinions of *the world*. The employments would be disapproved—perhaps even scoffed at; and such sentiments would be considered as savouring of unnecessary strictness and austerity. Because THE WORLD, avowedly, does not take its sentiments from the Bible; does not appeal to it as a standard; but sets up its own authority, enacts its own rules, and issues its own decisions.

At the same time, brethren, it must not be conceived that a man acts religiously, or thinks scripturally, merely because he opposes general opinion. The only proper course is, to be independent of general opinion; to choose a course according to our special case and circumstances, which we believe that God will approve, and which we resolve to follow, whether approved of men or no; whether with the world, or against the world. St. Paul has clearly laid down the christian feeling in this matter: “With me, it is a very small thing to be judged of man, or of man’s judgment. But he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

And indeed, brethren, the world is not always mistaken in its opinions. The world would pronounce a person wrong who professed to be earnest in religion, and lived as if he had no religion;

who professed to see the value of the soul, and yet lived as if it could receive no injury; professed to “seek first the kingdom of God,” yet took no pains to secure it. The world is ready to acknowledge that if any one follows *pure and undefiled religion*, they must lead a very different life from those who seek their portion here. The world is ready enough to ask, when it sees reason for the question, “What do ye more than others?” Those who seek more than others, ought to do more than others. Those who aspire to a place at the right hand of God, “where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore,” ought here to “let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.”

And now, brethren, I trust that you will put to yourselves, before you sleep to-night, this plain question: “What sign can I find in myself of *pure and undefiled religion*?”

You believe that Christ Jesus came into the world, that all that trust in him might not perish. In this faith you were baptized; this faith you confess, now that you are come to age; and you “show forth the Lord’s death,” at the holy table, as your own hope for eternal life. You read and

hear his word, "which is able to make you wise unto salvation."

All this is well. But all this relates to yourself. The apostle acquaints you that religion must extend beyond yourself, and guide and actuate your conduct towards others.

The history of Job sets before us a man under affliction, and brought by affliction to examine himself, and consider what his ways had been.

Every individual must prepare for a season like this. It may not be, like Job's, a season of temporal privation and distress; but there must come to every one a time, when the body is to return to the dust as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it. And then the inquiry will be made, "Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord?"

Job found some comfort in reflecting that he had not "withheld the poor from their desire, or caused the eye of the widow to fail;" he had not "eaten his morsel by himself alone, and the fatherless had not eaten thereof."⁷ So far from it, he thus represents his case: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready

⁷ Job xxxi. 16, 17.

to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing with joy."⁸

Claim, my brethren, for yourselves, a testimony like this ; a testimony to be borne at last by Him, for whose sake and in whose name you have thus lived, and who " is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love."

I do not fear that the self-inquiry will lead to self-righteousness. A man is little likely to justify himself in a self-righteous spirit, who carefully examines into his life and practice. The more closely a man calculates the time which he has given to God, and the time which he has given to the world, the less ground will he find for self-complacency. The more accurately he sums up the account of his charities, and the account of his worldly expenses, the more likely he is to condemn himself as an unprofitable servant, who has not done that which it was his duty to do. But, at all events, we must blot out of the Bible a large portion of its contents, unless we acknowledge that every one is bound to judge concerning his love towards God, by examining the degree of his love towards man ; and to think of what he is before God, according to what he is towards his neigh-

⁸ Job xxix. 11—13.

bour.⁹ For “hereby,” by our loving “not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth,” “we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”¹

⁹ ἐν τούτῳ.

¹ 1 John iii. 19. ἐμπροσθεν αὐτου.

SERMON XIX.

LABOUR IN THE LORD.

Rom. xvi. 12.

*Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the
Lord.*

THESE words appear among the different messages and salutations which Paul sent to those among the Christians at Rome who were personally known to him. Many of them had shown their zeal in the christian cause by assistance given to it. And this he does not forget to notice, whilst he mentions them by name. "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. *Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.*"

Now we cannot but observe, that this is the

language of approbation. There is no hint given, that Persis or others who were similarly engaged, were engaged in a way that need demand restraint or excite suspicion. Persis is not warned, lest she interfere in matters that are too high for her; or lest she step beyond the place assigned her in the church of God; or lest she allow her zeal to attract notice, and make her singular. The apostle, whilst he makes mention of her name, is reminded of her useful, active life, her "labour of love," and speaks of it in a manner which could not but imply that he approved her conduct, and encouraged her to proceed. Christians have still the same God to judge their actions. He changes not. They have still the same motives, inseparable from their faith as Christians. What, therefore, was approved in Christians eighteen hundred years ago, would be approved in Christians now. And it behoves us to inquire, first, the nature of that labour which St. Paul commends in Persis; next, the reasons which impel to it; and thirdly, the reward attending it.

First, what does the apostle allude to, when he describes Persis as *having laboured much in the Lord*?

We immediately perceive that he is not speaking

of secular labours. He is not praising Persis because she performed the ordinary duties of life in a conscientious spirit, discharging them “as unto the Lord, and not unto men.” This, indeed, Persis would do; it would be part of her christian character: but such is the case with all Christians. It does not distinguish one Christian above another, that he lives unto the Lord, that he “sets God always before him.”

Neither can the apostle speak of works of charity alone, or of temporal assistance bestowed upon the needy brethren. The phrase here used is not suited to describe such works. If these had been chiefly in his thoughts, he would have praised Persis as one who was “glad to distribute;” ready “to do good:” as one who had “bestowed much labour on us;” or who had ministered to the necessities of the saints, and yet did minister.” That which is peculiarly termed *labour in the Lord*, was labour in promoting the knowledge and spirit of the Gospel. Those laboured in the Lord, who, having become disciples of Christ, assisted the apostles and elders in the proper duties of their ministry by doing what they could; what they could, consistently with their own vocations, and with their abilities and their opportunities. They were not preachers, to whom it was committed

publicly, and with authority, to proclaim the message of reconciliation; but they were teachers, "fellow-workers," or "helpers" in the Gospel. It appears from the epistles of St. Paul, that these were numerous, both men and women; the latter, perhaps, the most numerous, as having in all ages most leisure at command. And there were many duties which they might perform. Under the apostles' guidance, they would instruct the converted heathen in the many facts and truths which these must needs be taught, before they could give a reasonable account of the faith which they had embraced. Copies of the Scriptures of the Old Testament were then rare: information must chiefly come by word of mouth. They would acquaint the catechumens with those holy books: would show the connexion between the law and the Gospel; providing that they should not continue for ever mere "children in understanding." The apostle complains, in writing to the Hebrews, of those who were not competent to be thus employed: not enough advanced in knowledge to communicate it. "For the time," he says, "ye ought to be teachers; yet ye have need that one teach you again."¹ Persis, like others whom he mentions as having laboured with him in the Gos-

¹ H eb. v. 2.

pel,² had become a teacher: that is, was able to declare to others what the Lord had done for her soul; and to lay those first principles of the doctrine of Christ, which the simplest believer may communicate to his ignorant or sinful neighbour: which, in truth, he must be prepared to communicate, before he can exercise the commonest duties of charity; those duties which St. James points out, as the very characteristics of the Christian.³ For how can he visit the poor and fatherless, without directing the fatherless to their heavenly Father, and the poor to him who hath said, "Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh." How can he "visit the widow in her affliction," and not remind her of the hope which takes its sting from death, and its victory from the grave? How can relief be ministered to the sad and weary soul, without reference to him who himself "took our sins, and bore our infirmities;"⁴ who, "in that he himself has suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted?"⁵

² They are recognised, as having some authority, 1 Cor. xvi. 16, "Submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth."

³ James i. 27.

⁴ Matt. viii. 17.

⁵ Heb. ii. 18.

Some, perhaps, may be of opinion that such topics should be left to the appointed minister, and that ordinary Christians should confine their advice and assistance to temporal concerns.

Doubtless the minister should be informed of every case of ignorance or perplexity, every case demanding spiritual consolation. It is one chief benefit of local visitation, that it conveys to him such information; acquaints him with many individuals and many circumstances, which otherwise in our crowded neighbourhoods must ever remain beyond his knowledge. But, meanwhile, what should withhold the Christian from imparting his own conviction or experience, and assuring his afflicted neighbours, that there is one to whom the weary and heavy laden are invited, and that "those who come to him, he will in no wise cast out?" The apostolical writings imply that such were the common subjects of discourse among the early Christians. Indeed, they could not be the subject of thought, without being the subject of discourse whenever occasion should arise. Neither could Christians obey the precepts enjoined them, or warn one another, edify one another, exhort one another, comfort one another, if they were precluded from the topics which minister advice, and comfort, and edification. And as they could not

hold intercourse together, neither could they conform to the apostle's rule in their intercourse with others, or "be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them."⁶ Every Christian makes one of a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation;"⁷ and it his duty as well as his privilege to communicate "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."⁸

Such was the kind of labour in which Persis had been engaged, and for which St. Paul commends her.

II. But, secondly, what should induce Persis to undertake this labour?

First. Because, as a disciple of Christ, she was actuated by those feelings towards her fellow-creatures which would not allow her to be idle, satisfied with having found for herself the way to heaven. Let those distrust their own state, who can be so satisfied. Her neighbours had acquired a new value in her eyes. They were no longer looked upon merely as persons whose lot had been cast in the same neighbourhood with herself, and with whom she had

⁶ 1 Pet. iii. 16.

⁷ Ibid. ii. 9.

⁸ Eph. iv. 29.

no concern in common, except as might regard the affairs of this present life. She would look on them as born for eternity; and as capable of being heirs of the same kingdom in which she had herself obtained an inheritance. She would regard, no doubt, and assist, as far as might be, their temporal good; but far more would she regard the state of their immortal souls. If they were ignorant, if they were careless, if they were given up to things present, without Christ, without God in the world, she could not see this with indifference. The Christian knows the end of such a life; knows that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God:” and, therefore, he desires to instruct ignorance, to awaken carelessness, to rebuke wickedness, “if peradventure they may escape out of the snares of the devil, who are now taken captive by him at his will.”

Brethren, where there is love, there will be this anxiety: love cannot exist without it. When a stranger sees a pallid countenance, a hectic cheek, he passes by, it makes no impression on him—he has no interest in the subject of it. Not so the tender parent: she watches the feverish look, she marks the haggard eye: she hastens to the physician, she catches at every hope of remedy; she cannot rest till this is sought; she does what—

ever it is in her power to do. She loves, and because she loves, she fears : and because she fears she acts. And such is the Christian's feeling for the soul : he knows a danger which others disregard : and he cannot know it without endeavouring to avert it. Look at the apostle Paul at Athens. We are told that " his heart was stirred within him, when he saw the people wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the market daily with them that met with him." ⁹ Had he not known the consequences of idolatry, he would have seen the people wholly given to it, with no emotion. He would have lamented, indeed, that such was " the vain tradition which they had received from their fathers ;" that such were the unhappy circumstances in which they were placed ; just as too many see the wicked who surround them, and sigh perhaps over their state, but take no pains to raise them out of it. In the apostle's heart there reigned a principle, which made this indolence impossible : therefore " disputed he in the market daily with them that met with him ;" " if God should peradventure bring them to repentance and the knowledge of the truth." And this is the measure by which Scripture teaches us to judge of the reality of our love towards others.

⁹ Acts xvii. 16.

How striking are those words of the inspired preacher:—"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart, consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works?"¹

2. But there is another feeling in the Christian's heart, which excites him to the same *labour in the Lord*:—the feeling of thankful love towards the Lord for whom he labours. This love makes him desire that fresh trophies should be added to his cross: fresh triumphs of his grace be manifested: new jewels be placed upon his crown: that he should see more and more of the travail of his soul, and be more and more satisfied with the blessings which reward his precious blood-shedding.

Whoever is zealous in a cause will be earnest to promote it. The atheist is eager to make his proselytes. However active you may be in the service of Christ, you will not be more active than others even in your own town are, to do the work

¹ Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

of Satan.² The infidel is spreading his poison. The wicked are always anxious to draw others into their own corruption. And certainly that love must be very lukewarm, and such as Christ will not deign to accept, which will be outdone by the disciples of evil: which will be content to take the benefit held out, but neither regards the honour of the benefactor, nor complies with his commands.

O brethren, it is not well that a certain rich man is spoken of in our Lord's parable, who fared sumptuously every day, and took no heed of Lazarus at his gate. And I am sometimes led to question whether we are not alike guilty in the sight of God, when we enjoy our religious privileges, our bibles, our sermons, the minister who delights us, as the rich man enjoyed his luxurious fare, and, meanwhile, take no heed of those who are famishing around; who have no taste, alas! for the bread of life, or no means of obtaining it. It is not more certain that a burning fire will diffuse its heat to all the circle round it, than that true religion, that the love of Christ, kindled in the heart, will extend its radiant warmth to all within its reach. And greatly do I admire that

² This sermon was preached at Manchester on behalf of a District Visiting Society.

large and active band, who do not confine or quench the flame which burns within their breasts, but allow it to expand in the exercise of religious charity; and whether in schools or in cottages, or wherever a door is opened to them, impart that knowledge which is their own best possession and, by kind advice and patient teaching, direct their neighbours towards Him, who to themselves has been “made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Such is the result of a true sense of what we owe to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. It disposes and leads to *labour in the Lord*: it is an active energetic principle: and those in whom it exists will not be satisfied unless they employ their opportunities, their activity, their ability, their resources, in whatever way seems open to them, that they may bring all whom their influence can reach, to “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

III. I must treat but briefly on the third point,—the blessings which follow such *labour in the Lord*.

My brethren, it is truly “twice blessed.” The blessing, to those on whom it is conferred, who can describe? We cannot calculate it. We cannot

fathom the depths of eternal misery. We cannot reckon the amount of eternal happiness.

It came to my knowledge, some years ago, that by a regular system of district visitation, like that which it is here desired to maintain, one hundred and sixty persons, in the course of two years, to whom religion and its observances had previously been altogether unknown, were led, through the influence of personal advice and instruction, to regular attendance on the means of grace. Can we estimate the ulterior benefit bestowed, we may trust, on many, at least, of these persons? Never, on this side the grave. And surely it is for purposes like this, that to some the talent of leisure, to others the talent of affluent fortune, to another the talent of authority, to another the talent of persuasive eloquence, is given. It is, that these talents may be traded with, not hidden. O what might our community become, if that revenue which is annually wasted (in every rank) on things worse than useless : if that time which is thrown away, and leaves no trace or record that it has passed : if that ability which is devoted to trifles not worth a care, were used to promote the welfare of our fellow-creatures, were dedicated to their comfort, their relief, their instruction, their admo-

nition, to the various ways in which they might be made happier in this present time, and wiser unto salvation?

If we judge from experience, there are few places of which the Lord might not say, as of Corinth formerly, "I have much people in this city."³ We have reason to believe that many a seed lies dormant, waiting till the earth be stirred, the Sun of righteousness admitted, the dew of grace drawn down from heaven.

But I rather confine myself to the blessings returned by a gracious God to those who devote themselves to his cause. "God is not unrighteous" to forget their works and "labours of love." Their life derives new value, new interest, from the eternity with which it is connected. Every day acquires a fresh importance from the duties to which it is devoted. In this world's opinion, those stand highest, and are accounted enviable, who are nearest to an earthly sovereign: to be employed in his service, is the first dignity of the land. All cannot be thus engaged; but all may be engaged in the service of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords: and he repays

³ Acts xviii. 10.

his servants with no perishable wealth or short-lived honour. "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."⁴

But there is also a reward which belongs to this present time; an earnest of that which is to come. There is comfort, when we feel that our faith is not a barren creed, or a lifeless profession, but an active principle in the soul: that our lives are governed by it, our practice conformable to it. There is comfort, when we can read the description given of those whom the Lord approves, and see some agreement between the habits we have cherished, and those which he expects in his people. "I was naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁵

We can read, too, St. James's description of "true and undefiled religion," and see that we have made it our standard: that we have "visited the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and kept ourselves unspotted from the world."⁶

We can read the account of those who first believed the Gospel, and find something of the

⁴ Dan. xii. 3.

⁵ Matt. xxv.

⁶ James i. 27.

same feeling in our own breasts ; that “ the love of Christ constrains” us as well as them : that we likewise “ judge, that he died for all, that they which live might live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”⁷

• In that last hour to which we must all come, there are many who may sink in apathy : their consciences have been never touched or stirred, and conviction will not reach them till they wake in an eternal world. But they who “ have been once enlightened,” and brought to a knowledge of the truth ; these, when they come to die, will need a proof that they have been not “ hearers only, but doers of the word.” I know that in such an hour, to speak of works as the ground of acceptance, of merits entitling to reward, is to set the soul upon the rack. The holiest man that ever lived, the Christian who has laboured most abundantly in the Lord, will be the first to thank God for his “ unspeakable gift,” eternal life through Jesus Christ : that “ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”⁸

Still, secure to yourselves the comfort of which you will then feel the indispensable value ;—“ the testimony of your conscience,” that not in carnal

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 15.

⁸ Titus iii. 5.

pleasures, not in worldly gratifications, not “ in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” but “ in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world.”⁹

9 2 Cor. i. 12.

SERMON XX.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

John xiii. 34.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

IN this passage our Lord, very shortly before his death, lays down as the distinguishing character of his religion, brotherly-kindness and charity : and in the succeeding verse declares it to be the peculiar mark by which his disciples should be known, that they *have love one to another*.

The first thing that strikes us here, is, that this should be termed a *new commandment*. Benevolence, if considered in the abstract, is that which most ennobles the character of man, and raises it nearest to what we know of the divine nature,

and prepares it best for a higher and a purer state. Or again, if we argue upon the actual condition of mankind, as creatures of the same God, heirs of the same lot, and liable to the same calamities, we should say, that charity, charity in its widest sense, sympathy with the wants and feelings of others, was the very quality which we might expect to find most natural and universal. And, undoubtedly, if man had not fallen from his high original, had not lost the image in which he was created, had not become corrupt and sinful : he would not need to be commanded to exercise charity ; no selfish feelings would restrain him from hastening to relieve the sighs of pain, or wipe the tears of sorrow.

But as, together with sin, pain and distress and poverty entered into the world, so also does sin stand in the way of the alleviations which might lessen these evils. The same cause produces the misery, and keeps back the remedy. Selfishness and covetousness had so far prevailed, as to render it *a new commandment* that men show *love to one another*. To the Jew, indeed, it was new, chiefly as to the principle by which it should be now enforced, and its fulfilment insured. But to the vast majority of the world, to the Gentiles upon whom “ the day-spring from on high ” was now about to

shine, it was a *new commandment*, both in principle and in practice. It is no part of our duty, in the plenitude of religious blessings, to exult over the errors or exaggerate the sins of those who wanted that heavenly light, against which we who enjoy it too often close our eyes. But we cannot be insensible to the fact,—a fact so decisive as to the natural corruption of the heart,—that we may read the public and private history of the most civilised nations of antiquity, and find scarcely a single trace of that virtue which was to distinguish Christians; no recognition of the principle, no practice of the duty. Pressing wants were occasionally relieved, sometimes from motives of ambition, and sometimes from political alarms; but we look in vain for any signs of true philanthropy, any indications of that kindness which regards a fellow-creature as a friend, and treats him as a brother. We do not find that the rich contributed of their superfluity to mitigate the distresses of the poor and needy; that they associated to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction;” that they devised means to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wandering, and to receive the penitent: no vestiges of ancient charity, no monuments of benevolence survive; and, among the ruins of fallen pride and useless magnificence, there may be much

to astonish the eye, but there is nothing of moral interest to gratify the mind.

Something further then, it appears, is wanting to restrain the predominance of natural selfishness ; something beyond the mere circumstance of beholding the wants of others, and being able to relieve them. Something more is requisite to awaken a sense of duty, and stimulate men to fulfil it, than the possession of a common nature, or the luxury of doing good. And this new principle is found in the religion of Christ. Charity grows naturally out of it, as a plant from the root. It proceeds from the truth which the Christian acknowledges, and by which he lives and moves. Christ has loved him : and *as Christ loves him, so loves he* his fellow-Christians. His benevolence seeks no other pattern, and, as far as the hindrances of remaining corruption allow, is limited by no other measure. *A new commandment I give unto you ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

This principle gives a distinctive character to christian charity, which I shall attempt to delineate according to its most striking features.

I. First, it is disinterested : independent of gra-

titude, or public esteem, or any other earthly recompense.

Though the happiness of the Deity is incomprehensible to human faculties, thus much appears evident, that it is not of a nature to receive addition. Therefore when he “who was in the beginning with God, and was God;” who, being “one with the Father,” was “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person:” when he came down from heaven, and took upon him the form and nature of man; it was strictly a DISINTERESTED act of mercy; it originated in no personal views; it was neither prompted by uneasiness nor by hope; but resulted from pure benevolence towards those whom he came to save.

A son of Adam cannot soar this height. He is allowed to look for the recompense of reward. The heavenly kingdom which is revealed to him, hallows the ambition and justifies the self-love which seeks its treasure there. But every inferior motive, every mere earthly consideration, is condemned by the disinterested love which is set before him as his example. And such is the world, that the encouragement of this example is often needed. The highest and truest charity is not always appreciated as it deserves, or better re-

compensated than that of Christ, when he “stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.” If, then, I have the praise of this world in view, my exertions will stop when the world does not behold, or beholding, does not approve them. But if my Redeemer, with no other object than my salvation, descended from the highest heavens to walk in this vale of misery, shall I look for a return, and therefore be deterred by ingratitude, or restrained by disapprobation? Shall I withhold my charity, unless it is seen of men, or secures the reward of their favourable opinion?—Such charity, it is plain, is mixed with too much of earthly dross to bear the test when every man’s work is tried: weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it will be found wanting.

II. Secondly, christian love will be self-denying.

The Incarnation of the Son of God was truly an act of SELF-DENIAL. He became man; and of man the description is, that he “is born to trouble.” But his was not the ordinary lot of men, in whose cup, though mingled with bitterness, the mercy of God has left much that is delightful; and whose path of life, however rugged, is en-

livened with cheerful prospects, and strewed with many flowers. The Saviour of the world was not only "acquainted with grief," the common inheritance of all flesh; but emphatically "a man of sorrows." Not to dwell now on that last and perfect sacrifice, which he came to offer; when his spirit appeared to sink under the accumulated burden of the sins of men and the Father's mysterious wrath:—consider only, what more particularly bears on our subject this day, the extent of his sufferings during the whole period of his life on earth.

It is painful even to good men to be forced into the company of the intemperate or the profane; to be made the reluctant spectators of profligacy or cruelty. What then must it have been to our Lord, to "sit at meat with publicans and sinners?" to encounter the self-complacent haughtiness of the Pharisees, the profane railing of the Sadducees, the contemptuous neglect of the nation at large! Bitter are the feelings of an affectionate father, when a prodigal son remains deaf to his advice, and persists to the ruin of his soul: grievous is the disappointment of a minister, when those whom he has long and faithfully warned, "count themselves unworthy of eternal life," and persevere in the "broad way which leadeth to destruction."

What, then, must have been the daily anguish of the Lord Jesus, whose whole life was passed under the pressure of these sufferings! How little in comparison do we know, how infinitely less do we feel, of the value of the soul! Levity, prevailing errors, the very frequency of sin, make us dull and sceptical with respect to its exceeding sinfulness. There could be nothing of this in him who saw enough in its consequences to reconcile him to the cross, and enough in its extent to require omnipotence for its remedy.

Will it be thought that I am overrating this part of our Lord's trials? Surely not, when we remember, that as he beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it in an agony of prophetic grief, to think that its inhabitants had refused his proffered mercy, and must now await the extremity of divine indignation. Surely not, when St. Paul has said, that with the fashion he assumed also the feelings of a man, and "was in all points tempted like as we are:" and has reckoned among the severest of those trials, the "contradiction of sinners against himself," which he endured.

Here, then, we are furnished with an example, of which the weakness of our nature requires to be constantly reminded. Christian charity must often be self-denying, and painful, and laborious. It

demands a sacrifice of time, or a sacrifice of wealth; and there are many selfish purposes and selfish indulgences, in which either might be more agreeably employed. But our Redeemer deprived himself of enjoyment which it passes our faculties to conceive, that he might communicate some share of it to those who deserved nothing at his hands. We are called upon to visit the abodes of misery, and to witness sufferings which recoil upon ourselves. But the Redeemer left the songs of angels, and the adoration of the host of heaven, not merely to alleviate distress, but himself to suffer its intensest agony. Again, to do good, so that no evil may ensue, is laborious, and demands the habitual exercise of prudence, reflection, and forbearance: and charity thus employed, in which case alone it can be employed usefully, is often received with coldness, and repaid with ingratitude. But the Son of God has left us an example, that we should follow his steps; the character of whose life it was, that he went about doing good; that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: and was requited by the neglect, the treachery, the persecution even unto death, of those whom he came to save.

Thus are we, his disciples, taught to deem no

trial too severe, no self-denial too mortifying to be undergone, by which our fellow-creatures may receive benefit: our charity must be stopped by no difficulty, and repressed by no ingratitude, and limited only by our opportunities of doing good. For “we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” And those who are engaged in works of active usefulness, have often need to strengthen themselves by this argument. When they find their labours undervalued, their zeal misinterpreted, their efforts counteracted by ignorance and sin, their best encouragement is, that “the servant is not greater than his Lord;” that their heavenly Master was far more unworthily requited, yet was not “wearied in well-doing.”

III. The last effect of the Redeemer's love which I would mention, is the close union which it establishes amongst Christians. Without doubt, our ideas of mankind at large are exalted, when we contemplate them as objects of the divine love. In that single sentence, “God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life”—in that single sentence there is more

to elevate and ennoble man, than in all that philosophy ever argued upon the dignity of human nature. So when we descend from the universal race, to the individuals with whom we are concerned, they acquire in our esteem a tenfold value, when we regard them as united to the same Saviour to whom we ourselves are looking for wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Those must not pine in ignorance, or languish in sickness and unmitigated pain, who are dear to our Redeemer : children by adoption of the same God, whom we are taught to call Father, we must treat them as brethren : heirs of the same heavenly kingdom to which our hopes are raised, we must smooth their path to the land of promise : members of that sacred body of which Christ is the head, must mutually assist and co-operate with one another. Such is the invariable effect, where christian faith exists. And therefore we find, that where men are to be kept down in hopeless bondage, and degraded from the rank which God designed for them, they are at the same time debarred the privileges of Christianity. As if from an instinctive consciousness, even in those who have no title to name the name of Christ, that Christianity would raise them in the scale of being, and place them beyond the reach of the oppressor.

These considerations naturally account for the very important rank which our Lord's discourses give to charity. More especially, in his prophetic description of the day of judgment, we are surprised to find this alone brought forward of all the christian graces. Not, certainly, that integrity, purity, humility, meekness, are less required or valued by him. But because thus much at least may be infallibly pronounced, that whoever is destitute of christian charity, cannot be actuated by christian faith. No man can have a sense of the mercy which he every day requires, yet be himself unmerciful to a brother's errors. No man can be duly grateful for the pity shown him, yet refuse his compassion to a brother's need. No man, regarding Christ as the author of all his hopes, can be insensible to the welfare of those, who have been bought by the price of the same Saviour's blood. Gratitude to the Redeemer must overflow towards the redeemed. And love denied to them, is denied to him.

And the result has been seen, in fact, from the earliest to the present time. To be servants of our common Master, to have sought an interest in the same Redeemer, is, and always has been, a bond of the closest union; and has influenced men to make sacrifices for the sake of others, to which no

other principle could have engaged them. We see in our christian brethren those whom Christ so loved, as to lay down his life for their sakes: we see those whom he has called to be one with him, has chosen as his flock; who are placed under his care, and supported by his Spirit; who dwell with him by faith, and will hereafter dwell with him in glory. This unites them to us, as children of the same father, and heirs of the same inheritance: unites the highest with the lowest, the wisest with the most unlearned; to know that if they have nothing else in common, they are dear to the same God, and actuated by the same feelings, and governed by the same love, as they travel towards the same country, where all distinctions will be done away, except that single distinction which separates the "children of darkness" from "the children of light;" the "children of this world" from "the children of the kingdom."

And let no one deny the credit to our holy religion, and suppose that men are become more charitable, because they are more wealthy or more civilised. Alas! wealth, without religion, is selfish; and refinement, without religion, is selfish too: whilst true and active charity is found in the humblest, and the poorest, and the least educated,

if only they are Christ's disciples. When we trace a river in its progress, and find it swelled at different points by a multitude of tributary streams, and reach at last the mountain spring from which it issues forth, we cannot doubt the source of the mighty flood which fertilizes a country, or carries a navy on its surface. And with no more justice can we refuse to trace back to our religion that CHARITY, which we find beginning with the dawn of the Gospel, and proceeding with its progress; which we find growing in the community, as the Gospel is more generally received, and strengthening in the individual, as the individual is strengthened in his christian faith; which we find best understood where the Gospel is most studied; and most perfectly practised, where the influence of the Gospel is felt most intimately. We see that it owes its origin to the precept, *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.*

See, therefore, brethren, in conclusion, the excellence of that religion, which, wherever it prevails, so wonderfully meliorates the condition of mankind. Our Lord himself has directed us to judge of teachers who prefer a claim to our attention, by the fruits of their instructions. We may be sure that he did not intend to exempt his own reli-

gion from a test which he applied to others. He came indeed for a higher and more lasting purpose, than merely to minister to temporal wants and comforts. He has taught us, also, to subject the body to the soul; the perishable to the immortal part of our nature. Yet since, in our present circumstances, afflictions, though known to be transitory, are often grievous to bear, we cannot be surprised if a revelation like the Christian, while it directs our first attention to things above, should be of such a nature as to extend the comforts and mitigate the evils which belong to our present stage of being. If it were too much to allege that we should wonder if it did not, I may at least assert that we may be grateful that it does: grateful that our divine Master, while he bids us ascend by an upward and laborious course to the city of God, has smoothed our progress by his merciful provisions. And I need not point out what charity, if it were universal, might effect towards mitigating the sorrows, tranquillising the fearful apprehensions, and removing the pressing wants which perplex a large proportion of our fellow-creatures. I need not attempt to describe the cheerful picture which our world would present, if all loved their neighbours as their Redeemer loved them, or as children of the same Father

should love one another. Yet I have shown that charity even of this exalted degree is so interwoven with the whole texture of the religion of Christ, that christian faith cannot exist without aiming at it, or be satisfied without exemplifying it. Therefore from the earliest to the latest societies of Christians; from the time when “the multitude of them that believed,” as recorded in the Acts, “were of one heart and one soul;” to the successful efforts of the present period, which has beheld savages laying aside their ferocity, and national enemies embracing one another at the foot of the cross; in every climate, in every stage of civilization, the disciples of Christ have been distinguished by their mutual love; and the Christian has proved the Christian’s friend, the Christian’s brother.

Finally, brethren, if the obligation of Christians to the exercise of charity is thus binding, allow me to say that the claims of that particular charity are peculiarly strong, for which I solicit your aid this morning. Of a public hospital, that may be asserted which cannot be asserted of all charities, that it is impossible it should be so perverted or abused as to produce harm instead of good. In this calculating age, when even begging is a trade, some charities create their own objects:—a fact

which ought not to stop our hands, or turn away our heads from the poor man :—but may reasonably make us ponder as to the properest methods of giving. An hospital, as we know, is designed to mitigate the pain and the sicknesses to which sin has made our nature liable. Now we can never so effectually relieve pain and sickness, but they shall still be dreaded and avoided. We may weary the most patient efforts of medical skill; we may exhaust the cup of charity to the dregs; but it will still be thought better to continue in health, than to have health restored; better to be free from pain, than to seek its alleviation. And if health is to all proverbially the highest blessing, how truly is it so to the classes for whom an infirmary is provided; to those whose daily bread depends upon their daily strength to labour, whose sickness receives few comforts, and whose pillow, if smoothed at all, must be smoothed by the hand of charity. I feel that in behalf of such an institution I may speak boldly; may without scruple remind you of the apostle's words; “He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

Indeed the annual records of an hospital furnish the strongest grounds for both inward reflection and active exertion.

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I find, that during the last year ten thousand persons have been admitted on the books. What an evidence of the calamities by which in this fallen state we are surrounded !

Have any of those here present been afflicted in like manner ? Then think how much you stood in need of relief, how highly you prized it, how grievous you would have felt the want of it : and let that recollection determine you, whether you will contribute or refuse to contribute, whether you will contribute largely or sparingly.

On the other hand, has God's mercy exempted you from the like affliction ? What reason to be grateful ! And if you do not show your gratitude by assisting your less favoured brethren, how do you obey the christian precept, and love them *as Christ hath loved you ?*

The books to which I have referred, suggest one further reflection. Out of the number who sought relief at the hospital, I find that two hundred and sixty died.

This might have been your lot—must be at some time or other ; and no one, believe me, on his dying bed, ever regretted the sum which he had subtracted from his own enjoyment to bestow on others. Dying beds, and those who attend them, have borne witness to many lamentations,

but never bore witness to any one complaining—
“ I have withdrawn too much from myself and my family, to relieve the distress around me. I have done too little for myself, and too much for my Saviour.”

Learn, from this truth, to expend your money in a way which cannot be repented of. For “ he that giveth unto the poor, lendeth unto the Lord : and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.”

SERMON XXI.

THE BLESSINGS ATTENDING THE CONVERSION
OF A SINNER.

James v. 20.

He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

To convert a sinner from the error of his way, is not the work of man, but of God. Whoever tries it in his own strength, will soon find how limited is the influence, in spiritual things, of one mind over another. The most affectionate persuasion, the most indisputable argument of the most practised orator, can of itself no more convert the heart of man, than the most experienced philosopher can create a world.

But God is often pleased to make use of the

arguments, and the persuasion, and the influence, which men employ, as the instrument by which his Holy Spirit works to *convert a sinner from the error of his way*. The philosophy which cannot add a single particle to the matter which the world contains, can yet turn to the most useful purpose the materials which God has made. And so in the spiritual world, there are numerous means within the power of man, to which God gives efficacy, and performs through them his gracious purposes of repentance, conversion, and salvation.

To this providential agency St. James alludes, when he stimulates religious exertion and religious charity by the motive set before us in the text. *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins*. May that Spirit which dictated those stirring words, be present amongst us, whilst I endeavour to enforce the motive they contain!

That motive is, to *save a soul from death*. For there is a death of the soul: a twofold death to which the soul is subject. There is, first, a moral death, which comes by sin: a state in which the spiritual part of man is reduced to the condition to which natural death reduces the body. When life has left the body, the agencies for which it was formed must cease, and which in its healthy con-

dition it achieves. The senses are inert, the tongue is silent, the limbs have lost their power. Now the soul, like the body, has its faculties, when it is a living soul: it is capable of loving, of fearing, of honouring its God and Saviour; capable of looking beyond things temporal to things eternal; capable of spiritual desires, of spiritual hopes, of spiritual joys. But the sinner is dead to all these affections; has no more sense of them than the dead body has feeling or motion: and therefore Scripture describes those souls as *dead*, which are insensible to God and holiness; and those as *living*, which, being converted from the error of their way, are “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.”

Brethren, it were much, if this were all. It were much to restore the soul to life, even if we looked no farther than the present world. For as to the natural eye, it is delightful to witness the vigour, the activity, the beauty, which belongs to healthful life; and as it is distressing, in proportion, to see the stiffened limbs, the pallid countenance of the corpse,—so likewise to the moral eye there is the same strong contrast between the soul which lives to the great purposes of its being, and the soul which lies “dead in trespasses and sins.” Angry, malicious, revengeful passions—appetites

unsubdued—low, craving, unsatisfied desires—are so unlovely in themselves, and so injurious in their consequences, that it were much to *convert a sinner from the error of his way*, even as regards this world alone. But we are bound to look beyond. The death of the soul here, is the commencement of that state which awaits the soul when it leaves this world, and which is described by the word of God as death eternal. For “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death.”¹

My brethren, it must be so : reason and Scripture assure us that it must be so. Look at the sinner dying unconverted : *the multitude of his sins not hidden*. Take the example which the Bible furnishes : and call to mind the deaths of Ahab, or of Jezebel, or of Herod, or of Judas. Or see the single illustration supplied by Daniel,² when Belshazzar king of Babylon “made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whilst he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had

¹ Rev. xxi. 8.

² Dan. v. 1, &c.

taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem: that the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein." In this wanton revelry, it was not enough to forget God; he must be insulted too, openly defied. "The king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in these vessels, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of wood, and of stone."

The history proceeds to relate—"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

Is it not then plain, too plain to be gainsayed, that between the moral death of the soul on earth, and the eternal death which shall ensue, there is an inseparable connexion? The one leading necessarily to the other? "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." Alas! my brethren, there was nothing in the nature of his death, there is nothing in the nature of any death, to change the character of the soul. Belshazzar left the world, what whilst living in the world he had been. His spirit returned unto God who gave it, "in whose hand his breath was, and whose were all his ways," yet whom "he had not glorified." What could await him, but "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord?"

Think, then, what it is to *save a soul from death*. If it were to save it merely from annihilation, from

ceasing to exist at all, we might be less careful in the matter; but it is to save it from that misery which Scripture teaches us to connect in our minds with death eternal: that “worm which dieth not;” that “outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth;” that state which so moved the Father with compassion, that “he sent his only-begotten Son, that all that believe in him might not perish;” that state which the Son so pitied, that he consented to suffer, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” our sins atoned for and pardoned, and so *hidden*. For the death of the soul is eternal death; and the eternal death of the soul is the eternal misery of the soul. Truly, brethren, we need not extend our thoughts beyond the capacity of the soul for suffering; to understand the force of that motive by which St. James would urge us to *save a soul from death*. We might grant, for argument’s sake, if a disputant would have it so, we might grant that the fire unquenchable, and the “smoke of torment which ascendeth up for ever and ever,” are figurative expressions, not requiring a literal interpretation. Be it so—be it supposed that they are meant to excite in us an idea of what we cannot fully comprehend, by suggesting the thoughts of what we here experience. At least, it must be

allowed that they are designed to suggest the notion of suffering; of the heaviest, the most intolerable suffering. They can signify no less, than that the lost soul will endure a miserable eternity. And need I remind you, brethren, of what the soul can suffer? Need I remind you of the bitterness of grief? of the wretchedness of suspense—of the lingering torture of disappointed hope? of the agony of remorse? Need I bring before your minds the recollection of the patriarch Jacob, when he lamented over his favourite Joseph? “And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.”³ Need I set before you the wretchedness of David, when grieving over the hopeless death of Absalom? “And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept; and as he went, thus he said; O my son Absalom; my son, my son Absalom—would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”⁴ The torment of Judas’s conscience was greater than he could bear: he cried out in despair, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood:” and casting down the silver pieces which he had received,

³ Gen. xxxvii. 35.⁴ 2 Sam. xviii. 32, &c.

and which now ate like canker into his soul, “ he departed, and went and hanged himself.”⁵

These examples give a feeble illustration of what experience in this world of woe too well illustrates to each individual heart, how much the soul is capable of suffering. And yet in this life there is no suffering without mitigation. To the wicked, there is commonly some gleam of hope; and to the good, there is always a light arising in the thickest darkness. What, then, must we think of suffering which has no alleviation of hope, or of time; which no light relieves, either from earth or from heaven? And such will be the sufferings of the lost soul, from which every hope is cast away; such the remorse of a lost soul, which has forfeited happiness unspeakable; such the despair of a lost soul, which has no prospect but of this remorse and this sorrow for ever. Surely it may well be compared to “the worm which dieth not, the fire which never shall be quenched;” and we need no stronger motive for exertion to *convert a sinner from the error of his way*.

Yet there is another motive still, which I am bound to lay before you: I must proceed a step further, and remind you, that to *save a soul from*

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 5.

death, is to restore a soul to life. “The dead,” said our Lord, “shall hear the voice of the Son of man; and they that hear shall live.” The morally, the spiritually dead, shall come forth like Lazarus from their tomb; shall be loosened from the chains of those sins which tied and bound them, and be admitted into “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And walking here in the path of holiness, and in the light of God’s countenance, turned from the ways of error to the ways of righteousness, they proceed to the end, which is everlasting life. As the state of moral death in this world leads to an immortality of misery; so a state of spiritual life conducts to an immortality of glory.

We reflected, just now, on what the soul can suffer. Let us also reflect on what it can enjoy. For of this we have experience too. There is a taste of happiness imparted to us here, which may lead us to aspire after that which is eternal and unalloyed. As the patriarch Jacob’s misery was great, when he sighed over the loss of Joseph, so was his enjoyment great, when the unexpected tidings reached him of his recovery; and he exclaimed, “It is enough: Joseph, my son, is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.”⁶ We

⁶ Gen. xlv. 28.

can also conceive of David's happiness, when placed upon the throne of Israel, "he went in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come."⁷ We can also imagine what joy must fill the heart of the aged Simeon, when it was revealed to him, that the child then presented by his parents in the temple was indeed the long looked for Saviour: and he exclaimed in rapture, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."⁸

And yet here, as there is no misery unmitigated, so is there no happiness unalloyed. It is never complete; it is never certain; never permanent. The same history supplies to us examples at once of the highest enjoyment, and of the deepest misery. There will be nothing to cloud the brightness, nothing to disturb the continuance of those joys which belong to life eternal; prepared in heaven for those who are converted from every evil way; who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:" and, being renewed in the spirit of their minds, "seek

⁷ 2 Sam. vii. 18.

⁸ Luke ii. 29.

for glory and honour and immortality by patient continuance in well-doing.”

Such is the nature of that motive which St. James has used to excite the active compassion of his Christian disciples. On the same grounds, in the strength of the same motive, we plead for the asylum connected with this hospital.⁹ It is designed to *convert sinners from the error of their way*, and so to save souls from death. It is founded on the conviction that the state of moral death in which they are when brought within these walls, must lead to that eternal death from which, without conversion, they cannot be delivered. And it is founded on the conviction that to achieve such deliverance no exertions can be too laborious, no measures too costly. Had the end been less momentous; had the soul less power to suffer or enjoy; had the descriptions of eternal misery been less awful, or of eternal happiness less glorious; or if no sanctifying, renewing Spirit were made known, by which those now dead in sin might be quickened with spiritual life;—then, perhaps, we might be content (content we could not be—but at least we might be forced) to leave the children of disobedience to the wretchedness in

⁹ The Penitentiary connected with the Lock Hospital.

which sin has plunged them. But we cannot do this with the word of God in our hands, and the promises of God in our knowledge. We see them gliding along that downward slope which will hurry them faster and faster, till at length they descend into the tomb. Mortal eye can penetrate no further; but the word of God extends our view, and shows us “the blackness of darkness for ever.” The dying moan is past, and mortal ear can hear no more; but “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” sound awfully in the ear of faith. To this, then, we cannot abandon them: we must make an effort for their deliverance; we who bear on our foreheads the title of Christ’s disciples. He has set us the example: by his own wonderful mercy he has taught us to be merciful. When all mankind were on that downward path and course, he hastened down from heaven for their deliverance; he opened a way by which the dead might live, and the *multitude of their sins be hidden*.

Now we sometimes find those amongst us who are strangely insensible to the circumstances of others. But I can conceive no human being who would not sacrifice every earthly consideration; everything but his own soul—if he actually beheld the end; beheld that which is easily spoken of, but which

it is so hard to realise to our minds; if the final state of—say a thousand impenitent, abandoned souls were before his eyes; and if he had the means of recovering those thousand souls from the gulf of misery which awaits “the wicked, and all the people that forget God.”

But in vain. The time will come when all that is in the world will not avail to rescue a single soul.

Yet, brethren, what hereafter will be impossible, is now possible. Nay, it is what God encourages us to attempt, by daily proving that it may be done. I have spoken of a thousand souls. A thousand souls have been brought under the teaching of the asylum which asks your aid, and here have learnt to “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” Hither they have come, as others are perpetually coming, in a state of moral death, tainted with the practice of all those sins of which Scripture declares that they who do them “have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” If their future condemnation is to be averted, their present condition must be changed; changed now “in the accepted time, now in the day of salvation;” before the final sentence be gone forth, “He that is unjust,

let him be unjust still : and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”¹

Now, then, step forward to *convert the sinner from his way, and save his soul alive.*

It is a hallowed gratification, which is purchased by money thus employed. It must be thus purchased. Those means are needful to the object. They who are received into this asylum, bring thither nothing of their own but misery and sin.

Yet methinks this should not render them less deserving of our sympathy. It is the state in which all must come to the Redeemer. He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Had mankind been righteous, they would not have required his ransom. “In Adam all died :” not those alone for whom we now entreat your pity. And not your pity only, but your active, self-denying charity, that here they may be supported for a while ; may “cease to do evil, and learn to do well :” here learn the value of the soul from the price which was paid for its redemption : here learn the mercy of God, who “willeth not that any should perish.” O where shall benevolence find a safer or more useful channel ? And on whom can we more justly call

¹ Rev. xxii. 11.

for such benevolence, than on those who have not been exposed to the temptations by which others have been overcome? Or how can they who have been preserved from the snares of Satan, give better proof of thankfulness to the “author of every good and perfect gift,” than by assisting to deliver from his power those who are now “led captive by him at his will?”

Take, then, the opportunity which is offered. There are many ways in which money is consumed, which bring a man no peace at the last. It has laid no good foundation against the time to come, by proving that there is something which we value more. Nay, it may excite a vain regret, that we who have received the gifts of God’s goodness, have not administered them as faithful stewards. But what is expended in withdrawing a fellow-creature from the way of death, and placing him within the means of salvation, may purchase a treasure which is imperishable. It may be endowed with all the blessings which the *soul saved alive* shall gain. In the providence of God the greatest results are often made dependent upon means which might seem inadequate or unworthy. And that very sum which would otherwise be employed to gratify luxury or encourage pride, might furnish the

means of bringing some perishing soul from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God; from indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to reconciliation and peace here on earth, and to a blessed immortality in the world to come.

SERMON XXII.

THE GUILT OF NEGLECTING THE STATE OF
OTHERS.

1 John ii. 9.

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

THE epistle from which these words are taken, abounds with tests or signs of christian faith; tests by which a man may try and examine himself, and prove his own soul; discover his state in the sight of God. Is he *in the light* or no?

Naturally, we walk *in darkness*. “Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” The Lord Jesus Christ came to disperse that darkness. It is the account which he gives of himself. “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.”¹

¹ John xii. 46.

But light may come into the world, and men may love darkness rather. Such was the sin of the Jews in general. Their eyes were closed; that they could not “see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”² And at all times, and in every age, there have been too many such: too many whose eyes the god of this world has blinded,² so that the light of truth which shines around them has never reached their hearts.

Of these St. John does not speak here. He speaks of those who profess to have come to the light, and to be walking in the light: who would be offended if any questioned their religious state, or doubted of their reconciliation with God. He does not question it, or point any accusation against them individually; but lays down a general rule, by which any one may judge himself, or if needful, be judged of by others. If any man say that he has been convinced of his natural sinfulness, and consequent condemnation before God;—that he has pursued the way, the only way of deliverance, and been brought to embrace the faith that is in Christ Jesus; has “received him,” as sent of God “to seek and to save that which was lost;” that therefore he is no longer “appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus

² 2 Cor. v. 6.

Christ ;"—if any man say this, and that being thus delivered from the darkness of sin and death, he is enjoying the light of the divine favour, and yet *hateth his brother*, this man deceives himself with vain words and false notions ; *he is in darkness even until now*.

May the light of divine truth shine on us whilst we contemplate these words !

The first inquiry must be, Who is the *brother* ? In the first and highest sense, the brother is the fellow-disciple ; those of whom Paul so often speaks under that endearing term, as "The saints, and faithful brethren in Christ : " those whom the Lord himself " is not ashamed to call his brethren ; " those to whom he appeared, when before his ascension he " was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." One, in short, who acknowledges the same faith, professes the same hope, and walks together in the house of God as a friend, is, in the proper sense of the term, the Christian's *brother*.

But when our Lord was asked, in a somewhat similar inquiry, " Who is my neighbour ? " ³ his answer showed how far in his esteem the term extended, and with the term, the obligation attached to it. It extended even to the Samaritan with

³ St. Luke x. 29, &c.

whom the Jews “ had no dealings.” And so in a like spirit he is to be regarded as my *brother*, who is heir of the same nature, born of the like parentage; nay, is a member of the same country, baptized in the same faith, and called by the same title of Christian. He may have forgotten “ the covenant of his fathers,” he may have neglected his baptismal privileges, he may be walking unworthily of his vocation. But still he is a fellow-man, the offspring of the same God, the object of the same universal love: and as such, he is *a brother*.

The next inquiry must be, what it is to *hate a brother*? How it can be possible for any man to *say he is in the light, and hate his brother*? Consider what hatred is. Joseph’s brethren hated him, being jealous of his character, and of the superiority which seemed to await him; and their thoughts were, “ Behold, this dreamer cometh; come, let us slay him.”⁴ Haman hated Mordecai, because he was his rival in the favour of the king; and laid a snare for his life.⁵ The princes of Babylon did the same in the case of Daniel.⁶ The chief priests and rulers hated Lazarus, because he afforded an evidence of the divine power of Jesus; and they

⁴ Gen. xxxvii. 19.

⁵ See Esth. v. 6, &c.

⁶ Dan. vi.

“consulted to put him to death.”⁷ Therefore, St. John writes afterwards, “He that hateth his brother is a murderer;” he has thoughts in his heart which, if allowed to lodge and be cherished there, will lead him to desire and even to compass the death of him who is the object of them.

It can scarcely, therefore, be in this strong sense of the word that St. John supposes the case of a christian man *hating his brother*. Such hatred as this, and the deeds that follow it, are among the sins which “go before a man to judgment;”⁸ which hardly allow him to deceive himself, and which certainly cannot deceive others. Hatred like this is the feeling of those who have no fear of God before their eyes; who are led captive by the devil at his will; who have never inquired about salvation, or renounced sin, or aspired to heaven. Such characters as these do not *say that they are in the light*. Confessedly, they walk *in darkness*.

But if we examine into the usage of the word *hate* in Scripture, we find that it does not always bear this strong and active sense; that men are spoken of as *hating* a thing, in a very different way from that in which Esau hated Jacob, or Saul hated David, or Haman hated Mordecai. Men are often said to hate that which they do not

⁷ John xii. 10.

⁸ 1 Tim. v. 24.

prefer; which they give up and abandon, and in so abandoning, act as if they hated it.

We know, for example, how our Lord said, “ If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father and mother, yea, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”⁸

Now, brethren, I need not say that no man can be called upon to *hate* his parents. If he could do so, where would his religion be? If he “ gave his body to be burned, and had not that charity” which binds a man to his nearest relatives—if he remembers not the sorrow which bore him, and the care which tended him, and the solicitude which prayed for him, and the labour which provided for his interests and supplied his wants, truly may we say that he is a stranger to the grace of God. How little would he resemble Him who left us an example! Him of whom we are told, that after having shown his divinity in the temple at Jerusalem, he accompanied his parents to Nazareth, and “ was subject unto them ;”⁹ and who from the agony of the cross provided for the bereavement of her whom he was leaving, and enjoined his beloved disciple, “ Behold thy mother !”¹

No man, therefore, can *be in the light*, and *hate* his father and mother. Yet he may be obliged to act

⁸ Luke xiv. 26.

⁹ Ibid. ii. 51.

¹ John xix. 27.

as if he hated them. The Lord himself did so, when he tarried behind at Jerusalem, and his parents “sought him sorrowing.”² He did so, when he refused to hearken to their call, and leave at their solicitation the business of his ministry.³ So a man may be bound by duty to leave his parents; to separate himself from them; to choose something else in preference to them. He may be called upon to act as St. Paul acted,⁴ when his friends at Cesarea surrounded him, and with one voice “besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.” He broke from them, saying, “What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus.” See—a bystander might have said—see how this man returns hatred for goodwill. His friends intreat him to remain amongst them. He casts them off, and leaves them to themselves, that he may pursue his own journey.

Just as a man, if he will be a disciple of Christ Jesus, must sometimes act as if he *hated his own life*. None, except in a morbid state of feeling, can really *hate* their own lives. But they may act as if they hated them, and wished to be rid of them. If a man did hate his own life, he could

² Luke ii. 48.³ Matt. xii. 50.⁴ Acts xxi. 13.

not do more than put it into jeopardy, or suffer it to be destroyed. And this the apostles did, when, in defiance of the threats of the chief priests and rulers, they “ceased not in the temples and synagogues to teach and to preach in the name of Christ.” They counted not their lives dear unto themselves. And what is this but, in effect, to hate and renounce them?

Thus, then, I explain the meaning of the phrase, when St. John speaks of one who *saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother*. He does not contemplate the bitter and revengeful feelings which belong to *hatred*, properly so called. He does not warn us against active enmity, whether of thought, word, or deed. But he would call it hatred, to show no signs and give no proofs of any other feeling: he would call it hatred to exercise no love; to act as those did,⁵ for instance, who meeting with a man who had fallen among thieves and been left by the way naked and wounded, paid him no attention, and passed by on the other side. This he would call hatred, because it was not love; and because it proved that some other feeling besides that of love towards a neighbour had possession of the mind; love of ease, or love of our own pursuits, or love of our possessions. St.

⁵ Luke x. 40, &c.

James writes to the same purpose. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"⁶ What does it show of brotherly kindness and charity? Yet a person might argue that he had no ill will towards these neglected individuals; no enmity against them; that he was in charity with all mankind; wished them all possible good; nay, would gladly promote it, if he could benefit them without cost or trouble. But St. James justly replies, "What doth it profit?" You say, "Be ye warmed and filled;" but ye do not provide the means: ye send away the suppliant, and ye leave him to pine out of sight, and remain in his state of destitution. It matters little, when you act thus, whether you acknowledge the feelings of hatred, or pretend to the profession of love. What could hatred do more to injure, than do nothing to relieve? What could hatred do more towards the most detested enemy, than abandon him to perish with cold and hunger?

Take example from the case of the rich man, at whose gate Lazarus is represented as lying, and being suffered to lie, "full of sores," and "desir-

⁶ James ii. 16.

ing to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." ⁷ Suppose this Lazarus to have been the known enemy of the rich man, whom after a long contest he had subdued, and brought within his power. And suppose the rich man to be one who indulged without restraint the passions of malice and revenge, and thought himself at liberty to inflict upon his conquered adversary whatever his angry hatred could devise. He could not have contrived a method of revenge which should reduce his enemy to a state of greater wretchedness than that which is described as the state of Lazarus. Yet the rich man did not cause that state by any active measures of injury. Only he did not relieve it by any active measures of charity. And he is held up to us as a specimen of a character which God exceedingly disapproves, and requires us not to imitate but to shun. For if any man *saith he is in the light*, believes himself to be at peace with God, and *hateth his brother*, *he is in darkness even until now*. He speaks to himself "peace, when there is no peace." And it appears that without being conscious of the sentiment of hatred, we may act the part of hatred; that without doing the injury which actual enmity might inflict, we may incur the guilt of injuring, by

⁷ Luke xvi. 21.

withholding the benefit which christian love, if it existed, would afford.

And now let me observe that within the limits of this culpable neglect, which has everything of hatred except the name, all the interests of our brethren are comprehended: not the temporal wants of the body only, but the everlasting concerns of the soul.

We may justly wonder how little this is taken into consideration.

If there were any class of persons suffering under bodily misfortune, whose case no charitable institution reached, we know, and are thankful to know, that an immediate interest would be excited, and appeals be made to a christian public whether such a case ought to be suffered to remain. It is the honour of our country, I ought rather to say of our Christianity, that none of the maladies which affect the body, none of the calamities to which the human frame is liable, are left without such alleviations as can be furnished by the hand of charity.

But is this all that should be expected of him who does not *hate his brother*? Does love extend no further than to the least important part of man? If we believe the Scripture, the temporary evils

that can afflict the body, great as we must own they often are, do not bear to be compared with the exceeding weight of suffering which awaits the soul, when leaving the world unreconciled to God, no pardon sought, no sins repented of, no peace secured. And if it is the sign of love to prevent suffering, and of hatred to neglect and overlook it, there may be as much of hatred in regard to the soul as to the body of our brother.

This is far too little remembered. There is no consistency in our conduct on this point. We forget that in the case of the soul, no less than in the case of the body, to neglect may be to injure, not to assist, may be, virtually, to destroy. Without hesitation we should condemn the person who could entice or lead another into danger, and then escape from it by a way open to himself alone, leaving his companion behind to perish. To active malice like this we should give its proper name, and treat it with detestation. But a person might see another entering unawares into danger, and know that the end must be destruction; yet give him no warning, offer no guidance. Would he be blameless? Should we not reckon him chargeable with the calamity that follows?

But if there is guilt in this, acknowledged guilt, we may justly ask ourselves whether it is not the

same kind of wrong to be aware of the spiritual danger of our brethren, and to leave it undressed ; to be acquainted with their destitution of everything that can benefit the soul, and not to exert ourselves towards remedying their condition.

If he, for instance, would be thought the most barbarous of men, who should see a troop of playful children entering the path of some tangled wilderness, where he knew they would be tempted to linger without thought of return, till darkness overtook them, and left them exposed to the beasts of the forest, which, “ when night cometh, creep forth and seek their prey :” if this, brethren, should justly rouse our indignation, let us consider whether it would be better to allow the children growing up around us, corrupt as they are by nature, and liable to temptation, to enter upon the wilderness of a world that lieth in wickedness, with no warning against its dangers, and no attempt to give protection.

An example of this kind, thus set before you, may serve to show how differently we are affected in a case of temporal danger, and of everlasting ruin ; may prove how the guilt of hating others may justly be imputed to us, when we neither inflicted nor intended actual injury. We

see them “drawn unto death,”⁸ yet we make no exertion to “deliver them.” Are we not then “consenting to their death,” and “guilty concerning our brethren?”

For such is the case to which I invite your attention now: the case of persons who having fallen into evil ways, and suffered the penalty of the offended law, are thrown upon the community again without guidance to protect them, or resources to support them. We know that there are many such annually discharged from our prisons; and we must not close our eyes against their state, and say, “We knew it not.” It may be a season of mercy to their souls. Their “sin has found them out.” Their conscience has been awakened. The voice of instruction has approached them, perhaps for the first time. At length the door is opened to them, and they are once more at large. When Peter was delivered from the custody of Herod’s soldiers,⁹ and the gates were miraculously set open to release him, he knew which way to turn, and knocked at the door of a disciple, where “many were gathered together praying.” But, alas! there are no christian doors open, no christian disciples waiting to admit these outcasts; no party of pious brethren praying for their deliver-

⁸ See Prov. xxiv. 11.

⁹ See Acts xii. 11—13.

ance, and ready to welcome them with thanksgiving. Their fellowship has been of another kind, and far different is the character of their companions. Satan finds them an easy prey, returns to their hearts again, and the "last error is worse than the first."

This, brethren, is the evil against which we desire to guard, in the HOUSES OF REFUGE¹ for which we intreat your aid.

The prodigal in the parable, when he felt the consequences of sin, bethought him of his father's house, where the "hired servants had bread enough and to spare." He returned to it, and was tenderly received. Those for whom we are desirous to provide, like him are prodigals, and like him have experienced the famine which prevails in the haunts where Satan bears dominion. Many are less criminal than he was; for he abandoned the roof of a kind and tender parent, and went away designedly "into a far country." But many of these have never known the blessings of parental kindness, or even, perhaps, the safety of a parental home; they have not despised the counsel of a father, but are suffering for his iniquity.² Let

¹ Houses of Refuge lately established at Chester, for male and female criminals when discharged from prison.

² Out of 943 prisoners in the house of correction at Lewes

them find in the asylum which Christianity affords, for it is a second nature, that care which fallen and corrupt nature denied them. So they may themselves become partakers of that second nature; and the punishment which falls on them as violators of their country's laws, may in God's providence be made "profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

And you, my brethren, who furnish the means of this correction and instruction, may be giving an evidence that you are brought from darkness into light, for you are not hating, but loving your fellow men. There is no clearer sign of christian light, than to perceive the danger of an unconverted soul. There is no surer proof of christian love, than to provide the means, the outward means, of that soul's conversion. It is to "deliver those that are drawn unto death, and them that are appointed to be slain."³

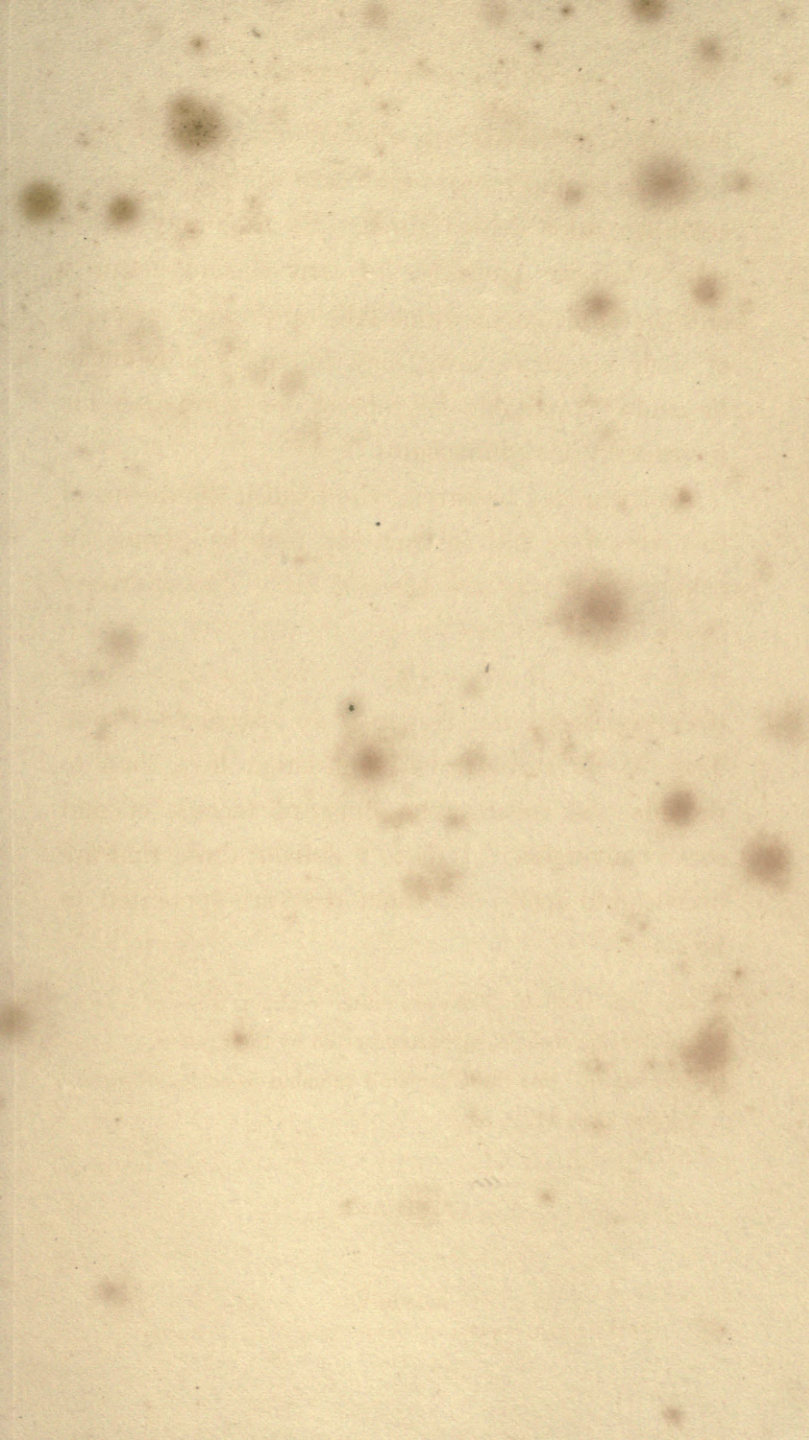
for the year 1839-40, 392 were either orphans from childhood, or had become orphans, or been deserted by their parents, before the age of 16. See the Chaplain's valuable Report, MDCCCXL.

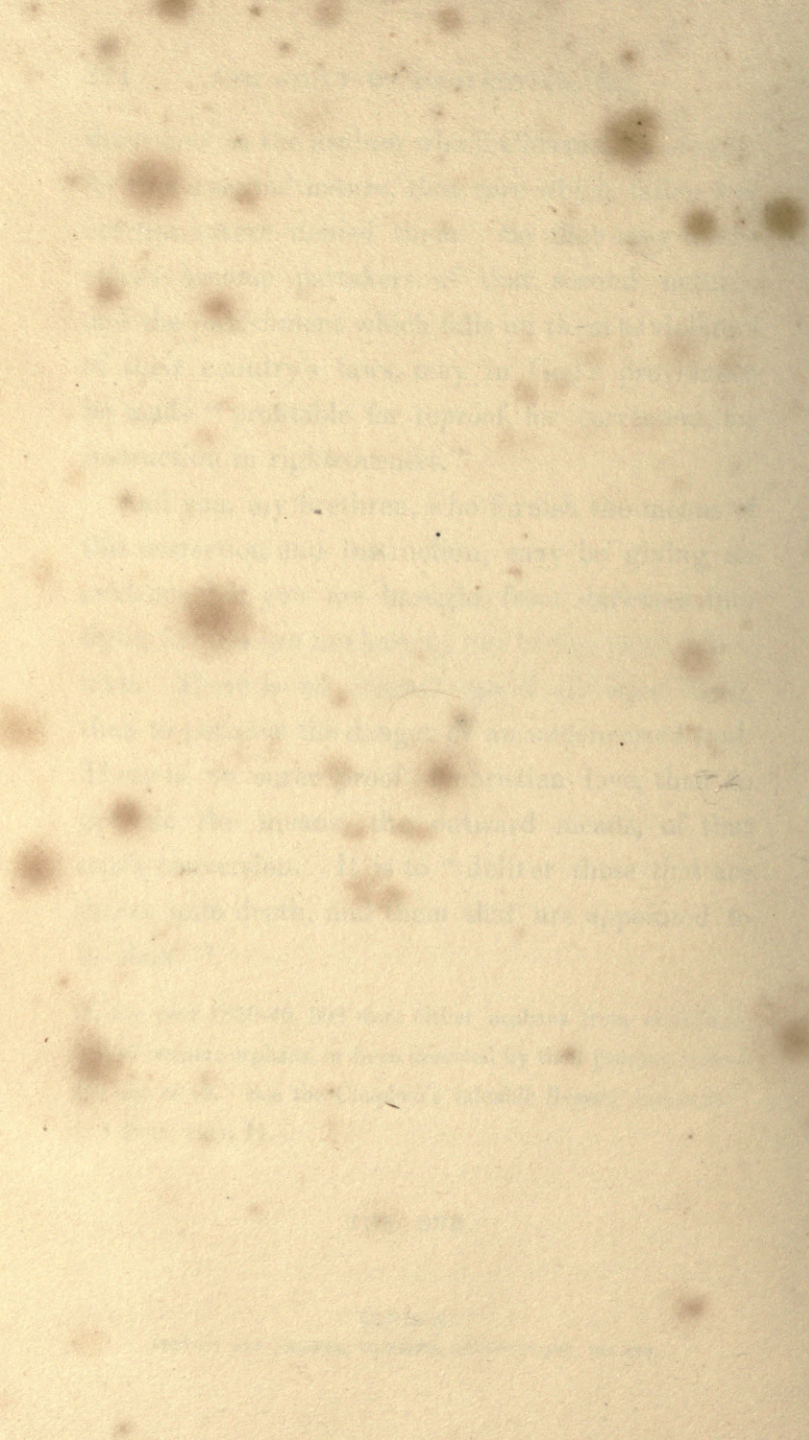
³ Prov. xxiv. 11.

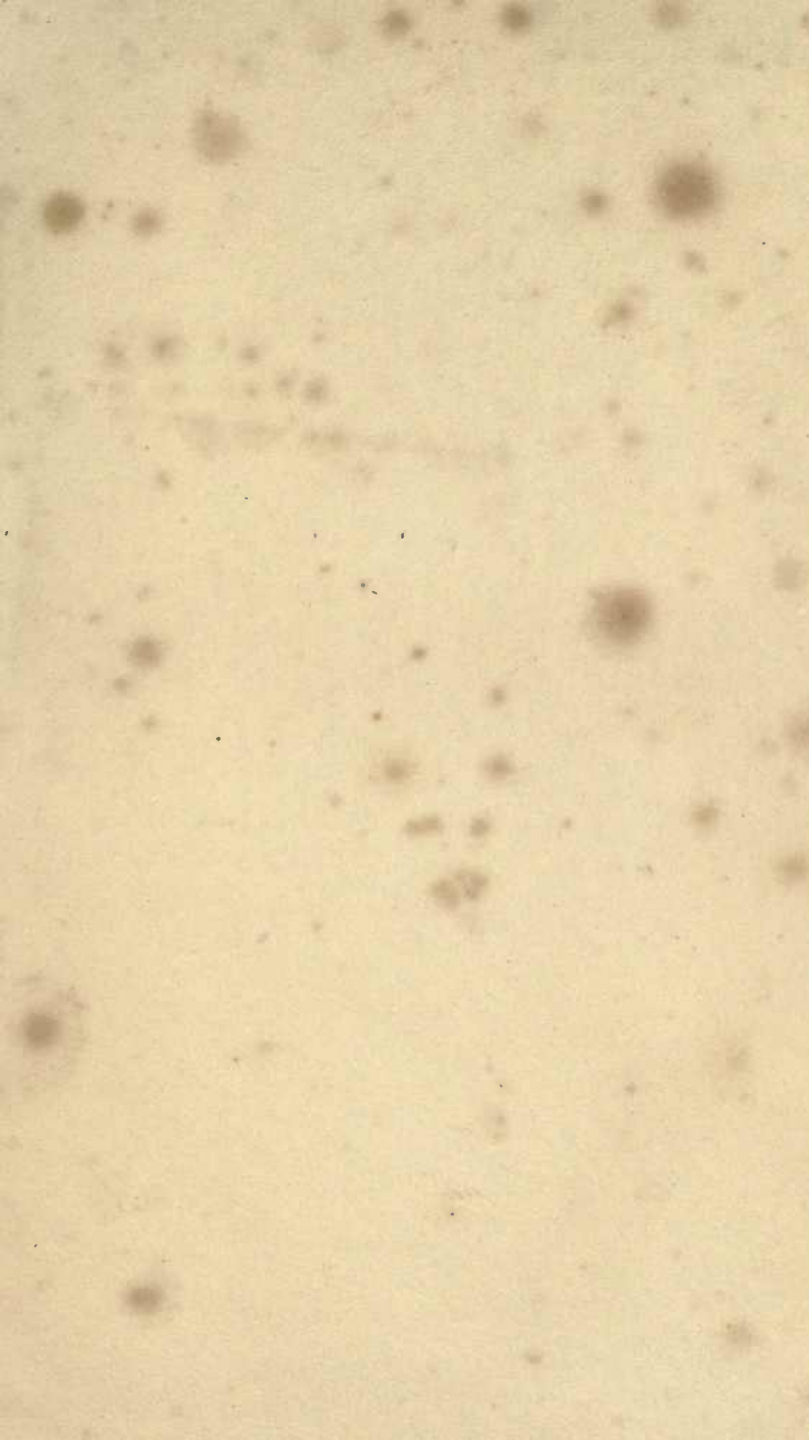
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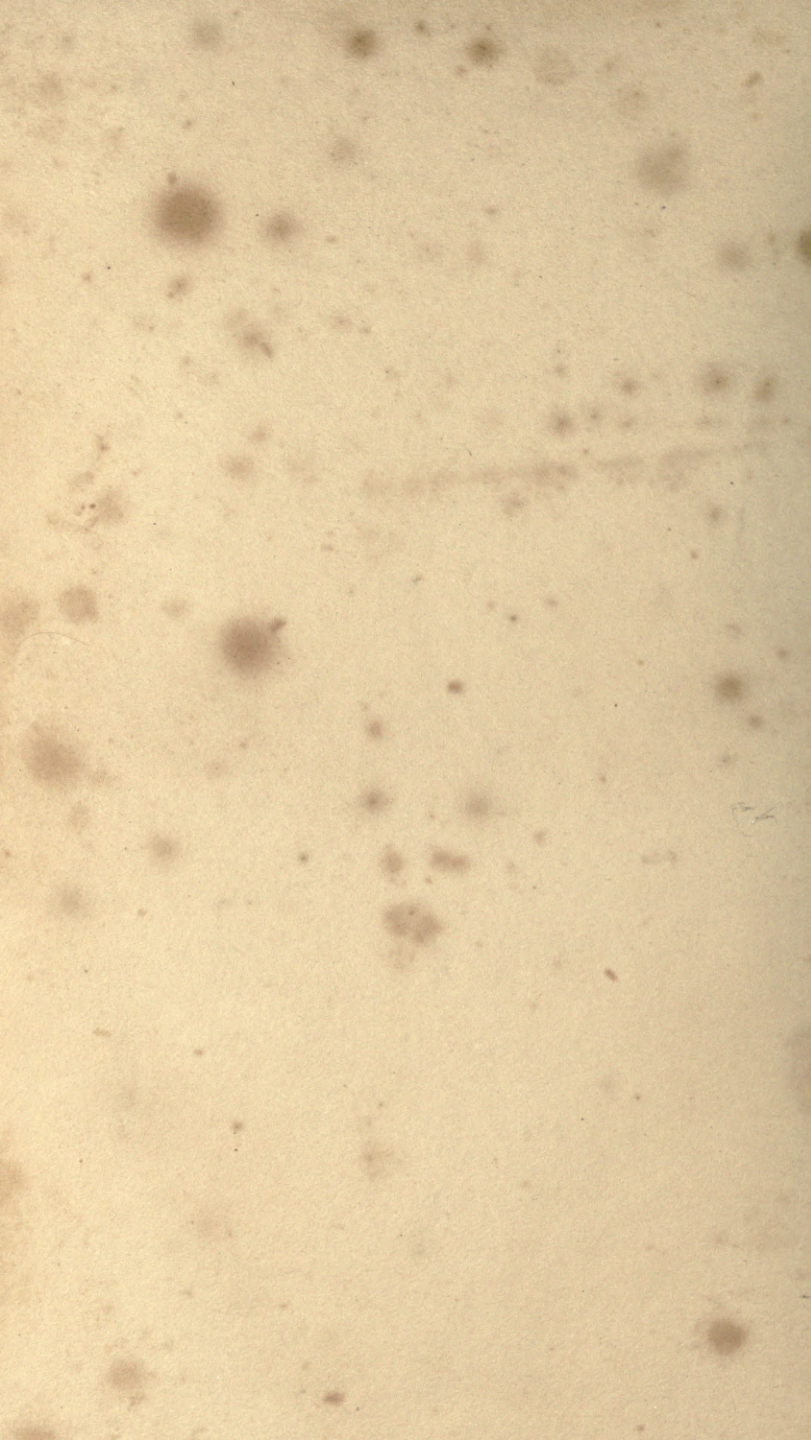
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